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MASTERS OF THE WORLD.

BY

MARY A. M. HOPPUS
(MRS. ALFRED MARKS).

"He was not far from any one of them."

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

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MASTERS OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE SILVER CORD IS LOOSED.

Perhaps it is better for us that misfortunes seldom come alone. Perhaps each single calamity coming separately would weigh heavier on us. We should suffer it with our whole power of suffering—whereas when troubles come in battalions, they, as it were, beat the breath out of us, and we are too stunned and bewildered to know how much we are hurt.

In spite of all the remedies which the physicians tried, Tertia grew worse. They differed as to whether this was an obstinate quartan, or a consumption with feverish symptoms, and here Symmachus had a great advantage over the Empirics, since here was a case in which the true nature of the disease was a matter of chief importance, and the mere treating of symptoms might do more harm than good.

Symmachus prescribed sow's milk, and ordered Tertia to inhale the smoke of dried cow's dung through a reed, and gave her the lights of a stag without tines, smoke-dried, and beaten up in wine; but he still placed his main reliance on the ass's milk. But all would not do. The bright spots on Tertia's cheeks burned there day by day, and her eyes shone so brightly that one would have thought they could never be dim with sleep. Aemilia's friends were always coming to see her, or writing her notes, with an account of some wonderful cure effected when all hope had been given up. Sometimes they sent the remedies—a wolf's heart, boiled in wine—this really *had* cured a young woman who was *quite* given up; pills made of the powdered tips of cows' horns, mixed with honey, two to be taken for a dose. One wrote to recommend elephant's blood, to be procured for a trifle from the keepers of the Vivaria. Another advised old lard, unsalted, to be taken internally; while a third urgently begged Aemilia to try compresses steeped in hog's lard and mulsum, mixed with wine, to be wrapped round the chest, and an egg mixed with tar to be given every four days. Arum seeds, combined with honey, as an electuary, had been very useful to a girl at Aricia. Frogs, stewed in their own liquor—as if you were boiling a fish—had quite restored Fulvia's cousin, when wasted to a skeleton.

Fulvia, indeed, made innumerable suggestions—some medicinal; others sheerly magical. The raw flesh of a snail, beaten up, and drunk in water as hot as she could bear it, would, Fulvia was convinced, loosen that sharp, tight cough which had so much distressed Tertia for the last three weeks; and the flesh of conchs, soaked in wine, would relieve the pain in her side. As for the fever, a dried hippocampus worn as an amulet, or the small stones found in the head of the asellus—they must be found at the full moon—tied up in linen, and worn in the same way. The juice of frogs boiled in oil where three roads meet, used as a decoction, has done good; but better still is oil in which frogs have been suffocated. The frog must be attached to the patient without her knowledge, before you begin to rub her. The heart of a frog will take off the cold chill—the heart of a bramble-frog is the best, and it should be wrapped in a russet-coloured cloth. The eyes of river-crabs, attached to the patient before sunrise, will cure a tertian fever—you must put the crabs back into the water after you have taken out their eyes; but, for a fever like Tertia's, quince-water would most likely be better.

Diet was not forgotten—a snail diet (of African snails); an oyster diet (Circeians the most delicate); an egg diet; African mice, skinned and boiled with

salt and water, and given with ordinary food; hare broth; partridge broth; acanthus broth (the black-leaved kind)—all these things, and many more, were recommended, and Tertia was made to try most of them; but eggs and ass's milk seemed to suit her best.

But she did not get on. Her weakness increased; her appetite failed more and more, and more active symptoms appeared—a short cough, a pain in the side, profuse night-sweats, which so reduced her strength, that it was evident she could not long hold out. Symmachus looked graver every time he came. He talked of a sea-voyage—often found beneficial—and of Tertia's spending next winter in Egypt. But how could Tertia support a sea-voyage—the noise and confusion of a ship, the creaking of cordage above her head, the groaning of oars below? Tossed perhaps for days by a contrary wind—to arrive at last in the noisy port of Alexandria, there to wait while quarters could be found in Canopus or Naucratis? Aemilia said this to Symmachus, who replied that sick persons often bore these fatigues better by far than their attendants did. However, it would not do to go now, with the heats of summer coming on. When the Nile should have fallen—which was never in less than one hundred days after the summer solstice—would be time enough. Till then, Tertia must remain here,

or at Praeneste—great heat must be avoided, and Praeneste might be best, on that account. Then, when Arcturus rises, and we may look for the shifting of the wind to the northward, the voyage might safely be made. With but a very moderate breeze, it is not more than eight days from Puteoli to Alexandria. Meanwhile, with so many pine-trees and cypresses about, and such good milk to be had, the patient was nearly as well off as if she had gone to the mountains to drink milk.

So Symmachus talked, knowing that before Arcturus should rise Tertia must embark for a longer voyage than that to Alexandria, and that, even were it not so, Domitian would most likely refuse his permission. But it was something to speak of, and better than confessing that the malady was beyond help. Aemilia was not deceived, but she forced herself to look forward to the voyage—one must look forward to something.

The winter had been unusually mild, and with the first days of spring the air of Rome had become oppressive. The thunderstorms, which now came almost regularly, did not seem to relieve the sultriness. The doctors recommended change of air for Tertia, and Marcellus and Sabina, hearing of this, placed at Aemilia's disposal their own villula on the Clivus Cinnae—more airy than Aricia, and so much nearer Rome. They even offered to remove to their house in

the City; but Aemilia would not hear of this. She hoped that change of scene, and fresh faces around her, might rouse Tertia from the apathy which was so distressing a feature of her illness. Aemilia sometimes fancied that Tertia had never been quite the same since the cruel end of poor Pasht. The child's nerves had received a severe shock, and she often made remarks, which, childish as they were, showed that she had been profoundly impressed.

"But I suppose we might all be dead before then, mother," she said one day, when Aemilia spoke of the summer, and of their return to Aricia. "I wish we could go at once. But then, I suppose we might be killed on the way there."

Piso had been painfully affected by some of these innocent speeches of Tertia. Once he caught her up, and pressed her to his breast, saying—

"My little darling, you are young—think of life, not of death!"

"How old are people before they begin to die, father?" asked Tertia, fixing her large eyes—grown very large and hollow now—on her father's. "Father, what is death?" she asked, when he was silent. And Piso replied—

"Death is an eternal sleep." He had said the words before he was aware. "What then, my dear?" he said. "'Pleasure ceases, but also pain.'"

"Is Pasht asleep?" asked Tertia.

"Yes; she feels no more the kite's claw which killed her," replied Piso.

"Ah! but she would rather have remained alive—I am sure she would rather have remained alive," said Tertia. "When I think of death, father, I grow so cold—oh! so cold—*here*," she laid her hand on her breast, and Piso saw with a pang how wasted and yellow the little fingers had become.

"My sweetest child, you pierce my heart," said Piso. "Why do you talk of death? Is not life pleasant to you?"

"It was pleasant before the kite killed Pasht, and before I was always so tired," said Tertia. "Father, does it hurt one much to die?"

"My daughter, you unman me!" cried Piso, clasping her to him so fast, that Tertia said, "Father, you are breaking me!"

Many a saying of the philosophers on the worthlessness of life rose up in Piso's memory, but he could not bring himself to repeat them to Tertia. No philosophy could make it seem good to him that Tertia should die.

"You must live, my child, to cheer your father's heart," he said.

"My little sister died in Britain," said Tertia, thoughtfully. "Old Marulla says she went to pluck

flowers with Proserpina. I wonder what sort of flowers they are. Marulla said they were marigolds, and violets, amaranths, and crocuses, and lilies. If you, and mother, and Calpurnia, and Aulus, and my brothers could come too, I would go with Proserpina. But I am afraid of the River of Styx and the Dog—— "

"Who has been frightening this child with these stories?" said Piso, angrily. "She is much better, as every one can see; but if she is to be told these stories, we shall have her fever coming back!"

"Why, father, I *always* knew about Styx, and the Dog," said Tertia. "And I knew about the ghost in Dama's Villa. There is *something* everywhere," she continued, languidly. "At Baiae, there were Dama's Ghost and the Fauns; and at Aricia, there was the Priest of Diana. Oh, I *was* afraid of him! And then there was the kite. And here there are the Images. When I had the fever, they all came and talked to me, and they told me something that was to happen, but I *can't* remember what it was."

Piso was to remain in Rome with his mother and Julius, while the rest of his family went up to the Villa Marcella. Domitian constantly sent for him, and it was desirable to avoid any appearance of wishing to be out of the way. In the intervals of his attendance on the Emperor, he worked at his *History*,

with which he had made considerable progress in the winter. But he often sat, pen in hand, thinking—not of what his next sentence should be, but whether Tertia would recover, whether Calpurnia would marry Aulus, whether his *History* would ever be completed, and, if completed, whether he would live to see an Emperor under whom it would be possible to publish it. Domitian greatly disliked historians, saying that history contained more lies than truth. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, his father's friend, was the only one he tolerated. And of all histories, a history of the Senate would be most unpalatable to him.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE TEMPLE OF DIANA.

The day before their departure for the Villa Marcella, Aemilia and Calpurnia went to the Temple of Diana on Aventine. Aemilia's anxiety about Tertia was so great, that she could not resist the temptation to try that mode of obtaining an oracle which consisted in visiting a temple, and taking the first words heard on coming out as the reply of the God. As they went, they met Aulus, who asked them where they were going.

"We are going up to Diana," replied Aemilia. Then, to avoid a discussion, she said hastily, "I cannot bear this suspense—the child fades from day to day. And I think, Aulus"—here Aemilia lowered her voice, and glanced round, but the street was empty—"that your new Gods give us no oracular replies, and that you condemn all divination. So that you at least have nothing to give me in return——"

"These are lying oracles, dearest mother, which only delude those who consult them," said Aulus.

"Nay, Aulus, for the first time in my life I am

sorry to see you," said Aemilia. "It is surely an evil omen to meet a despiser of the Gods when on one's way to consult their oracle. Forgive me"—as Aemilia spoke, she made the gesture with thumb and little finger which from the most ancient times the Romans had used to avert fascination. "*Salve*, Aulus," she said, "and wish me a favourable answer, and come in the afternoon to hear it."

"*Salvete*," said Aulus, and passed on, and Aemilia and Calpurnia turned up a street of private houses leading to the summit of the hill. There, a forest of temples rose into the clear soft April sky. This Hill of Remus, the "eternal seat" of Juno Regina—brought hither by Camillus when Veii fell—was only less rich in great and famous shrines than the Capitol and the Palatine.

The great Temple of Diana, built first by good King Servius, looked toward Latium and the Alban Hills, and from its stately steps the arena of the Circus could be seen. The golden roof and the gilded columns glistened in the early sunbeams. On the altar of sacrifice in the temple area still hung the faded wreaths of Luna.

But to-day Dian's altar was deserted, and her temple nearly empty, while fashionable crowds were thronging into the Temple of Minerva close by. Here fine ladies jostled each other, and their slaves came

to blows in the struggle for precedence, the beggars whined for alms, and stretched out dirty hands among the silken robes, and pulled at the rich cloaks. A sedan and a litter had just reached the entrance into the temple area.

"How dare you stick your filthy old litter in my lady's way?" vociferated a fellow, who by his appearance was a Phrygian. "I know you, old stealer of funeral meats!"

"Rags! I was here first," retorted the chief of the litter-bearers, setting down his litter so suddenly that he crushed the Phrygian's toe.

"Oh, oh! you have broken my foot!" screamed the Phrygian. "Son of a mangy dog! Letter-out of hired litters—all alive with vermin, too——"

"I'll teach you to abuse my servants!" cried the occupant of the litter—a fat woman bedizened with ludicrous splendour, stepping out more nimbly than could have been expected from her age and bulk. "Where are the temple-keepers?" she bawled. "Here, Marcus, Titus, some of you come and teach this pestilent fellow how to treat the wife of Virro in this fashion!"

"Who's Virro, I should like to know, that *my* lady's chair is to give way to *him?*" cried the Phrygian, hustling him. "A sewer-sweeper! Faugh! Make way!"

"Your lady, indeed! She doesn't look as if her husband could pay the column-tax! A pretty lady! Make way yourself, this moment, son of a bridge-beggar," cried the lecticarius. "Now, then, old bustirapus!" He dug his pole into the Phrygian's ribs.

"Bustirapus yourself! I'll bridge-beggar you! *Your* mother sold matches for broken glass in the Jews' quarter, you son of a Syrian hog!" yelled the Phrygian, giving his antagonist so furious a push, that he stumbled and fell, amidst the laughter of the bystanders—the wife of Virro declaiming all the while with purple face and clenched fists on the insolence of the lecticarii.

Meanwhile, the lady in the chair was being assisted to alight. It was Fulvia, who affected great alarm, and shrieking for Cotilus—who presently struggled out of the crowd with disarranged toga—declared she should faint, but thought better of it, and accepting Cotilus's arm, went up into the temple without seeing Aemilia and Calpurnia.

As they passed under Diana's portals, the hubbub ceased, and a sense of emptiness and calm filled the place. An old blind woman, who sat in the doorway, with a brazier between her hands, called out, "Give me a sestertius, my pretty ladies, and I will pray that your prayers may be heard!"

Aemilia dropped a denarius in the tin cup which was held out to her, and the old crone, detecting the rattle of a coin of greater value than a sestertius, broke into profuse thanks, invoking the blessings of Diana upon them.

"If you come to ask her for healing, may she send a speedy cure—as speedy as her arrow when she shot Orion!" she said.

As they advanced with slow and reverent steps towards the cella—their sandals echoing on the magnificent pavement, inlaid with agate and cornelian—the image of Dian—clothed to her feet, and with the golden crescent on her brow—detached itself more and more clearly from the dimness. Calpurnia looked up, and saw the blue sky through the long, narrow opening in the roof. In the cella, there were a few persons—all women—at their devotions. Most of them stood, but one or two had prostrated themselves. One of these was a very old woman, who appeared to be in deep distress of mind. She touched the altar as she lay, and placed her right hand on her mouth, in token of the most earnest supplication.

Aemelia and Calpurnia stood before the sacred image, bare-foot, their heads veiled, and sprinkled frank-incense upon the smouldering coals on the altar, softly uttering the name of Tertia. There were many ex-votos hanging on the columns, and laid at the foot

of the altar—tablets and hearts—some yellow with age, some bright and new. Seeing these things, Calpurnia raised her eyes to the face of the Goddess, and tried to read there a promise of help in her own need. But Dian's eyes were cold, and Calpurnia thought, with a shiver, that they had never kindled with love. It was but a cold kiss she gave Endymion as he slept on Latmus—as cold as the light of the crescent moon that shimmered on her brow. Yet she was the patroness of chaste lovers—these tablets testified to her power. Calpurnia had seen girls of Aricia carrying lighted torches up to her grove—that dread grove where the dark Priest reigned and awaited his slayer!

These thoughts of love seemed to Calpurnia a wrong done to her little sister—had she not come here to ask Dian the Healer to cure Tertia? Yet prayers for herself—for her union with Aulus—were thrusting themselves in between. In shame and remorse, Calpurnia sprinkled fresh frankincense on the altar, and prayed earnestly for Tertia. She was disturbed in her prayers by the old woman rising, and, with one last deprecating gesture, leaving the temple. She was very old and very wrinkled, and her face was pale and her eyes red with much weeping. "Shall I ever be as old and ugly as that?" thought Calpurnia, and Tertia's words darted into her mind—

"We may all be dead before that," and the old horror of death and decay seized upon her—a hatred of death, and yet a despair of life, because life leads to death. She felt the same sense of isolation—of being in a world alone—which had come upon her while Theophila was invoking the spirits at Cumae, and all things seemed unreal and like shapes in a dream. A hundred years ago, and we were not—a hundred years to come, and we shall not be! If Tertia recovers, she must at last be like that bowed and wrinkled old crone, who is beating her breast as she prays. Help me, O great Diana, dread Goddess of the Upper and Lower Air! Thou who art also Hecate, who rulest over the souls of the dead and hadst pity on Proserpina!

Then arose the awful vision of Hecate, wandering at night in waste places, with the souls of the dead in her train, seeking for the food placed for them where two roads meet. Must Tertia's soul soon go to swell this grisly train, at whose approach the dogs howl and whine? It seemed to Calpurnia that she smelt blood —she reeled, and Aemilia caught her but just in time.

"You are faint with long standing and the smell of the incense, my sweet," said Aemilia, tenderly. "Let us go—lean on me."

Calpurnia was trembling like a leaf, and when they reached the temple door, she was glad to sit down on

the jutting base of one of the columns of the portico. There were still many persons coming in and out of the Temple of Minerva, but the crush was over. The blind beggar had removed to the lowest step, hoping no doubt to catch an alms from visitors to both temples.

Aemilia would not speak, lest she should lose the first words spoken. So they sat silent, while the sun crept round to the south, blazed hot on the Temple front, and lighted up the hollows of the Alban Hills. Then, seeing that Calpurnia seemed revived, she rose to go, just as two respectable matrons came by from the direction of the Temple of Juno. With a fluttering heart, Aemilia descended the steps, longing, and yet dreading to hear the words of omen.

"For my part," said the younger woman, raising her voice a little, and speaking with decision, "I shall go to the Flavian Minerva. Give me new things, say I. Old things are all very well in their place; but new things are often a deal better!"

"Did you hear her, Calpurnia?" asked Aemilia, turning to her daughter. Calpurnia had flushed deeply, and seemed so startled, that Aemilia hastened to say, "Do not be alarmed, my darling! The Gods be thanked, the omen has nothing in it of threatening, though I confess I do not fully understand it. But we will put off our departure a day, and I will visit the Flavian Minerva to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER III.

CINNA'S HILL.

Symmachus was very angry that Tertia's departure had been put off even for a day. It was lucky, he said, that he had looked in just to make sure she was gone, otherwise he should have gone prancing up to the top of the Clivus Cinnae! How much longer did they intend to be consulting the Gods—who could not possibly do anything for Tertia as long as she was kept in Rome? Perhaps they were waiting while Ascletario inspected her horoscope, to discover a favourable hour for the journey? No words could express the scorn of Symmachus for those practitioners who united the astrologer with the physician. He finally flung out of the house in a fume, vowing that physicians were the most cursed unlucky dogs in the world—expected to cure a set of unreasonable people, who would not do as they were bid.

Marcella had been often of late to see her friend —coming in a closed litter, with her old nurse

Euphemia. She was delighted at the prospect of having Calpurnia as her guest. "My father and mother are out a great deal, visiting their friends," she said. "We can do just as we like. It will be delicious! We will sit out on the terrace—— Oh, it seems to me a thousand years till you come!"

Tertia took with her the urn which contained the ashes of Pasht. Just as they were starting, Marcella appeared.

"I've come down to bring you up!" she said. "You must ride in my litter. Oh, Calpurnia, when Tertia is better, what fun we will have, to be sure!"

"*Salve, deliciae meae!*" said Piso to Tertia. Then he looked at Aemilia, and she understood that he thought Tertia might return no more. "I shall come up often to see you," he said, as the bearers started.

"Don't look back, Calpurnia! Don't you know it is unlucky?" cried Marcella, and Calpurnia drew in her head before she had been able to see whether it was Aulus who was standing by her father on the steps of the vestibule.

The bearers went swinging down the Slope of Scaurus and through the vast deserted emptiness of the Great Circus, now abandoned to the fortune-tellers, who set out the emblems of their trade along the low wall of the *spina*. Calpurnia peeped anxiously

from the folds of the curtains, in hope—or fear, she hardly knew which—of seeing Theophila.

"Calpurnia, draw the curtains close," said Marcella, who felt herself responsible for anything which might happen to Calpurnia. "The air here is bad."

Several of the fortune-tellers came running when they saw the litter, and wanted to tell the ladies' fortunes, but Aemilia cried, "No, no; we cannot wait to-day!" and told the bearers to hurry on—to the intense relief of Calpurnia, who expected to see Theophila every moment.

So, on they went, in the fresh morning—past the white columns of Ceres and Proserpina, through the Beautiful Land, where the round Temple of Dis and the venerable Ionic columns of Fortuna Virilis rose close by the river, and one looked across Tiber to the Mucian Meadows and the heights of Janiculum. The women drawing water at the fountain turned, with their hands on their hips, to stare after the litters, and a string of waggons drawn by buffaloes of the Campagna plodded slowly on to the Fair Shore. And so, on, under the slopes of the Tarpeian Rock, and through the Herb Market, where the three temples looked down on the tumult of the buyers and sellers, chaffering round the great heaps of vegetables, which some of the salesmen were watering from the fountain;

ast the Portico of Octavia, where Calpurnia thought

she saw young Suetonius going towards the Greek Library; and under the massive walls of the Theatre of Marcellus, and the green expanse of the Field of Mars—not yet dried up by the heats of summer—with its many porticos and groves, and, far off, the bronze dome of Agrippa's Pantheon and the Statue of Augustus on the Mausoleum gleaming like flame in the level early sunbeams. There were grooms exercising their horses, and young men playing at ball, and studious persons reading under the trees. Marcella eagerly pointed out everything, delighted to play the cicerone—the Hundred Columns, and the laurel groves, and Pompey's Theatre, and innumerable other buildings, monuments, arches, and votive temples, all framed in living green, while the ball of the great dial of Augustus on the obelisk burned like the sun himself. In the exquisite clearness of morning the sharp edges of the marble seemed to tremble against the blue; the cypresses, like living plumes, rose high above the dark laurel-banks, the tall poplars gently quivered, and on the left, the yellow Tiber hurried swiftly down to Ostia and the sea.

CHAPTER IV.

A GREAT PROSPECT.

That is a wonderful view which lies spread out around Cinna's Hill. A strong thrower could hurl a javelin almost into the Vatican Gardens, yet no sound from the City reaches the hill-top. As Aemilia sat at her window while Tertia slept, it was almost as though her life lay spread out there before her. There was the great north road, the Flaminian Way, and toothed Soracte, and the Sabine Mountains. That way lay Cisalpine Gaul, where she was born. Southward, between the Alban and the Volscian Hills, the Appian Way went down to Capua and Baiae. Westward the maritime towns lay glistening out of the marshy mists of the seaboard, and the road to Ostia and the Tiber—like two ribbons, side by side, one white, one tawny—lying all across the many-coloured plain, with endless trains of waggons, strings of mules, litters and carriages, droves of cattle—no bigger in the distance than the figures of Tertia's "Sabine Farm,"

which her uncle Rusticus gave her on one of her birthdays—crawling slowly through clouds of dust, while on the river, the barges and rafts, and ships with swelling sails were packed so close that the stream itself seemed to be alive, and to be wriggling like a serpent between its banks.

There, glittering far among the Alban woods, was Domitian's Villa. Perhaps Lucius was at this moment looking at the lake from the great terrace, with his thoughts far away on this hill-top. The City, like a huge island in a lake, filled half the view—the Seven Hills, crowned with temples, towers, and house-roofs, and the encircling girdle of the walls half lost in the vast extent of the suburbs.

Very often Calpurnia sat here, and Marcella was always pointing out some distant town or some mountain-summit which she had not been able to make out before, but which ought to be visible "on a clear day." Marcella, who was born in the foggy marshes of Ravenna, always wound up her descriptions of the objects to be seen with the words, "on a clear day."

"There is Tibur, quite plain; and *I* can make out Curianus's Villa—but then I know where it is," Marcella would say. "We can see it plainly from the belvedere, and Mount Lucretilis—I don't think we *can* see Horace's Villa. Then, there is Gabii, and

the Citadel of Praeneste, and Tusculum, and Hannibal's Camp, and Fabia—up there on the rock—and Lanuvium. It is misty towards the sea; but they say that, on a clear day—— "

So Marcella prattled on, and Calpurnia, but half heeding her, tried to make out the house of Aulus on the Esquiline, shuddering a little as she thought of how Ascletario had called up spirits in it. But Ascletario had gone out on the Kalends of last July, and it was to be hoped he had taken all his spirits with him.

Tryphosa, too, looked from the window sometimes, as she sat there spinning and singing sweet monotonous tunes, which had a singular charm for Tertia.

" What is it that you sing, Tryphosa? " she would ask. " I never heard anything like that before.'

And Tryphosa would reply, " I heard it sung somewhere, and I remembered it."

" Sometimes, when I am asleep, I dream you are singing words to it," said Tertia; " but when I awake I cannot remember anything. Do you sing words, Tryphosa? "

Tryphosa seemed to be troubled at this question. " Sometimes," she said, and seemed to say it unwillingly.

" Sing them to me, dear Tryphosa," said Tertia, coaxingly. " In my dream, I thought them so sweet.

Sing them, I pray you. Perhaps they will make me well again. In my dream, I think they did."

"I must sing them in Greek," said Tryphosa.

"Oh! I shall not understand half," said Tertia, disappointed. "Well, sing them, and you can tell me afterwards what they mean."

So, in a low, soft voice, which seemed to Tertia like the cooing of the turtle-doves at Baiae, Tryphosa sang the ninety-first Psalm, according to the version of the Seventy—

"'He dwelling in the succour of the Highest, shall encamp in the shelter of the God of Heaven.

"'I will say to the Lord, Thou art my help and my refuge; my God. I hope in Him,

"'For He shall deliver thee out of the snare of the hunters, and from the confusion of speech.

"'In the place between His wings He shall overshadow thee, and under His wings thou shalt hope. His truth shall encircle thee with a shield.

"'Thou shalt not be afraid for the fear by night, for the arrow that spreadeth its wings by day,

"'For the Thing that passeth by in the dark, for the calamity and the daemon of the noonday.'"

"Is it a hymn to Jupiter?" asked Tertia, when Tryphosa ceased.

"It is a hymn to the great God of heaven," replied Tryphosa.

"That is Jove, Best and Greatest," said Tertia, simply. "What is the daemon of the noonday? Is it the kite that killed Pasht?"

"Evil can come at any hour, my darling," said Tryphosa.

"And now," said Tertia, "sing me the Tuscan verses, and I will go to sleep—and I will not fear the noonday daemon."

Tertia murmured these last words as if to herself, and turned her face to the wall, and so presently fell asleep, while Tryphosa span beside the bed, and crooned out a strange old song, with a Tuscan refrain, of which no man living knew the meaning. And as she sang, her eyes, like those of all the rest, wandered from her distaff over the long miles of the Campagna and the hollows of the Alban Hills, and, farther still, over the Great Sea, westward to Athens, where Eudoxus, looking eastward, thought of her.

Before Aemilia had been many days at the Villa she had a great surprise. She had been talking with Sabina—about Tertia, about Piso, about the absent Caius, and Calpurnia. "I am not like my husband," she said, "I cannot take refuge in the consolations of philosophy."

"My poor friend," said Sabina, "do you really think that any one finds much of a refuge in philosophy?"

"Well, to say the truth, Sabina, I do not think a woman can," replied Aemilia. "That is, I can understand that it is foolish, and even base, to fret too much at calamities which are inevitable—like death, for example. But this means that we are to harden ourselves—to say, 'I cannot escape, so I will bear;' and I admit that this seems to me a fine and brave thing. My mother-in-law, Cornelia, can do this. But whenever *I* have tried—I tried it when my little daughter Secunda died"—Aemilia's voice trembled—"and I have often tried it when I have been frightened; I tried it when my dear uncle was put to death—and since then often. But, oh, Sabina, it is a remedy almost like death itself—one feels as if turned to stone! At last, I thought I should burst, so I gave way, and let myself weep, till there was no strength left in me. I was as weak as an infant, but my anguish was assuaged in part. I no longer felt as though the Furies were lashing me with their whips." Aemilia sank back, and gasped for breath. "The very remembrance of that day," she said, "nearly kills me. Lucius, you know, was sent for, and I did not know——"

"Oh, my poor Aemilia!" cried Sabina, embracing her tenderly, "what have you not suffered?"

"Indeed, it was a foretaste of death," said Aemilia. "But let us not speak of that. I was saying that

the considerations of philosophy with which I tried to encourage myself, as Lucius had taught me to do, hurt me more than the pain itself. No doubt this is because we women are weak. To me, Sabina, the knowledge that a thing is inevitable only fills me with despair, and if I could by any means succeed in overmastering my anguish, it could be only by becoming stone, and so ceasing to feel at all. Surely, an unnatural state for a woman, Sabina! I have often tried to imagine how it would be with me if Lucius should die before me, and I have thought that I should then desire only to die. But, oh, Sabina, to those who love, death is a frightful thing!"

"What do you think comes after death, Aemilia?" asked Sabina, looking at her very earnestly.

"Alas! who knows?" said Aemilia. "Socrates did not fear it, and Cicero, though so timid a man, says he was sometimes half in love with the thought of it. How often has Lucius read me the passage, when my heart has failed me!"

As they talked thus, Marcellus came in, and asked what they talked of.

"We are speaking of death, Cneius," said Sabina; "and I was just asking Aemilia what was her real belief concerning it."

"And what *do* you believe, Aemilia?" said Marcellus, seating himself near them. They were in the

pleasant little peristylium, enjoying the coolness of the fountain, which murmured softly through a glossy screen of hart's-tongue fern. Marcellus was a grave, black-bearded man, somewhat heavy and slow in his movements, and he appeared so deeply attentive to Aemilia's reply that she was a little embarrassed.

"Indeed, Marcellus, you attach too much importance to my opinions," she said. "But I think you will bear me out when I say that, however philosophers may praise death, mankind in general—even the wretched—speak as though they thought it much worse than life. What do we say?—'Pale Death,' 'black Death,' 'Death the end of things.' And then, how do we speak of the state of the dead?—'Black Cocytus,' 'dusky Proserpina,' the 'pale ghosts'"—

> "'We shall be—when we fall
> Where fell pious Aeneas, rich Tullus, and Ancus—
> Dust and shadow—that's all.'

If I speak the truth, Marcellus, death appears to me the most terrible thing in the world; and I believe that most people, men as well as women, think the same in their hearts."

"I think you are right, Aemilia," said Marcellus, thoughtfully. He paused, while the fall of the fountain could be heard, and the creaking of Sabina's embroidery frame. "Then you would say, Aemilia," he said presently, very gravely, "that one who should

bring us deliverance from death, and from the fear of death, would be to us a benefactor?"

"Surely, Marcellus," said Aemilia, "if such an one there were, or could be, he would be the Preserver and Deliverer of Mankind!"

"Cneius," said Sabina, "may we not speak freely to her? She is compassed about with sorrow—shall we hold our peace?"

Marcellus rose, and going over to where his wife sat, laid his hand upon her shoulder. "Aemilia," he said, "there *is* such a Deliverer from death as we spoke of—one who can deliver those who believe in Him not only from the death of the body, but from the worse death of the spirit—that death which so many of us die while we yet seem to be alive—the death of bondage to vice and lust——"

"You also!" exclaimed Aemilia, understanding him at once.

"Yes," said Marcellus, quietly; "I also."

"It is amazing," said Aemilia, after Marcellus had spoken for a long while, telling her much that she already knew, and much that she had not yet heard.

"What is amazing, dear Aemilia?" asked Sabina.

"That you should believe in doctrines promulgated by teachers who are neither Greeks nor Romans—nor

even Egyptians," replied Aemilia. "A Jewish Rabbi instructing Greece and Rome is to me—I confess it—a thing so astounding that I can scarcely believe my ears!"

"Answer me but one question, Aemilia. Are not these doctrines more adapted to the circumstances of men than anything the philosophers have taught us?"

"I admit," said Aemilia, "that there is something extraordinarily consoling in this idea of a God who is also man—to whom, therefore, the petty affairs of our lives are not contemptible; but you could never expect a man like my husband, for example, to accept so—what shall I call it?—so homely a religion. It makes children of us—I think you said that your Prophet bade his followers become children, so you see I do not misrepresent you. Now, it would be ridiculous to expect such a man as Lucius to feel as a child. He is so wise, so calm, so brave—in short, so much a man! What place is there for Lucius in your system, Marcellus?"

"I think, Aemilia," said Marcellus, "that your husband is not far from the Kingdom of God. And there is the same place for him in it as there was for that Roman centurion whose servant the Lord healed, and of whom He said that He had not found so great faith, no, not in His own people, the Jews."

"Did He say that?" asked Aemilia. "Then He,

too, perceived the superiority of the Romans to all other people?"

"God is no respecter of persons," said Marcellus, "but in every nation accepts those who fear Him and act justly. With Him there is neither Roman, nor Greek, nor Jew—nor even male nor female, nor slave nor free."

CHAPTER V.

JEW AND GENTILE.

Beyond Tiber, in the Jews' quarter, under the foot of Janiculum, there were signs of festivity. It was the birthday of King Agrippa, and although he had never rivalled the enormous popularity of his father, yet the more sober-minded of his countrymen acknowledged that if his counsels had been followed, Jerusalem would not have been destroyed. He had now lived many years in Rome, in great favour with the Flavian Emperors, and the despised Jews were not sorry to show that they had had a King. The festival was but a miserable affair, however, for many held aloof—some remembering resentfully that Agrippa had been on the side of Rome, others recalling the dark stories of Berenice—for whose sake Titus almost lost the world. A few festoons of violets on the door-posts, a few lamps hung in the windows, and a greater air of leisure in the streets, together with a meagre display of shabby-gorgeous cloths on the window-

sills, this was all that marked the compliment paid to Agrippa.

The insulae of this quarter, like those of all the rest, were huge, many-storied piles, usually with outside staircases, the lounging-place of gossips and the receptacle for all sorts of filth. The Great Fire had not spread across the river, and most of the streets dated back to days when there were no restrictions on the height of houses. Many of these insulae rose to far above the regulation height of seventy feet, but they partly made up for this by leaning against each other—according to the ancient law *oneris ferendi*. The Jews' quarter, therefore, preserved many of the features of the City as it was before the Fire. It was late in the afternoon, and the street was crowded with buyers and sellers, hawkers of fish, fruit, tin-cups, slippers, asses laden with wood or with sacks of charcoal, waggons piled up with fish and other merchandize, coming up from the Claudian Port. At the open shops, the braziers had resumed their work, the money-changers were rattling the piles of coin on their counters, men with trays slung to their shoulders were selling cakes and sweetmeats, and the vendors of sulphur matches were bawling, "Any old broken glass to change for beautiful matches, ladies?"

At an attic window in one of the loftiest of the

insulae, sat Theophila, with an old woman and a child sitting near her—the same old woman and child to whom Calpurnia had given an alms on the road to Aricia. Theophila looked harassed and haggard. Her eyes glowed with an unwholesome, feverish fire, and as she leaned on the window-sill, she seemed at once weary and restless.

"Why cannot you let him go?" said the old woman—they spoke in Greek—"only misery will come of your meeting again, as misery came of your first seeing him."

"He is my husband, and the father of my child," said Theophila, lifting hungry eyes to the child's face.

"You have the child," said the old woman.

Theophila looked again at the child, then, with a long wail, she laid her head on the window-sill, and moaned, "Cursed be the day and the hour of my birth!"

"Say rather, cursed be the day and the hour when your first saw Clodianus, and set your affections on a Gentile idolater," said her grandmother. "But it is the idolatrous blood coming out—your father was a proselyte, a Greek by nation—and it is written, 'Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son; for they will

turn away thy son from me, and they will worship other Gods.'"

"Mother! it is said only of the Seven Nations—the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites," said Theophila, angrily. "And it is written also, 'Ye shall love the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt,' and again, 'As one born among you shall be the stranger coming among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, because ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' My father was a proselyte—much more therefore——"

"It is true no one had anything against him," said the old woman, "and he was strict in the observance of the Law, and when your mother, my poor Eunice, married him, he was one of the most thriving merchants of Thessalonica. Yet had I far rather that Eunice had wedded my sister's son, your great-uncle Ananias, the son of Joachim, who loved her as his own life. But she would none of him—and, indeed, he was not so goodly a man to look upon as your father. And so my husband Tobias, the son of Shammaniah, being dead, she had her way, and married your father, Alexander the clothworker. He lived by the Arch of Augustus, and every one spoke well of him. But he fell into misfortunes. Demetrius, the dyer of Thyatira, cheated him in some moneys, which he said he had not received of him; he lost his children, one

after another, till you only were left. Then your mother, my poor Eunice, died of a wasting, which I believe was caused by the witchcraft of a Gentile woman, who wanted your father for herself. Howbeit, Eunice died, and your father's affairs went from bad to worse, till at last there was an execution put in his house. And a sore grief and shame it was to me, and unhappy has my age been, and worse than the days of my youth! For then I was Susannah, the daughter of Zacharias, the son of Benaiah, and wife of Tobias, son of Shemmaniah, the two greatest clothworkers of Thessalonica, and the mother of sons and daughters, and now I am a widow and childless, save for you, Theophila, and this child—and you are cast out from your people. Woe is me!"

Many times during her story the tears had overflowed Susannah's eyes, and rolled down her cheeks—where they seemed to have worn two deep channels. But the recital of her sorrows appeared to afford her some dismal sort of relief, and she went on, in a monotonous tone—while Theophila lay silent across the window-sill, and the child listened to her great-grandmother with eyes intent on trying to understand a tale which she knew concerned herself and her mother. Susannah saw that the child was listening, and addressed herself partly to her—adding many details for her benefit.

"Your father dwelt with me, while he lived, in my house on the Egnatian Way, about a furlong within the Augustan Gate. I had kept on our business, and had prospered fairly, until your uncle Joses caught the plague in Alexandria, and died, and those about him robbed his dead body of great sums of money which he had just received—for which may punishment overtake them! Yet the most unlucky day of my life was the day when the bull escaped as it was going to be sacrificed on the Emperor's birthday, and knocked you down as it ran. You were returning with me from the synagogue outside the gate—— "

"Grandmother, I will tell her," said Theophila, suddenly starting up. She took the child upon her knee, and pushing back her hair, said, "Listen, Lydia, I will tell you a story about your father! It was not here—but far away in Thessalonica, where you were born—a great and famous city, Lydia!" Theophila lingered lovingly over the name. "It is a beautiful city, the chief in Macedonia, with the sea in front, and the mountains behind." She paused, leaning her chin on the child's head, and seemed to be conjuring up these scenes, among which she was born.

"It was in October," continued Theophila presently. "A bright, clear morning—oh, how the mountains stood out! I think of them when I see

these little Alban Hills that the Romans make such a fuss about! But I must tell you about your father. We were coming home from the synagogue, as grandmother told you, and we had got near our house, when we heard a shouting, and saw a crowd of people running, and then, in a moment, I saw a beautiful white bull, with his horns gilded and garlands of roses hanging round his neck. The garlands had got entangled in his forelegs, and as he came plunging along, mad with terror, he scattered them on the road. We shrieked and ran; but I slipped and fell, and I heard the hoofs of the bull thundering over the road —it is paved, because it is the great Egnatian Way —and grandmother tried to lift me up, but I was in agony, and I cried, 'My ankle is broken!' and just then, those behind the bull gaining on him a little, I suppose, made him swerve, and he leapt right over me as I lay. I felt the heat of his body as he sprang, and I swooned. And when I came-to—grandmother says it was full half an hour afterwards, but it seemed the next minute—I was being carried across our threshold, with a crowd of neighbours following, and I looked up and saw the face of the most beautiful young man I ever saw. He had a helmet on his head, and I knew he was one of the Guard. Some one said, 'Did the bull strike her on the head?' and the young man said, 'The bull never touched her—

I saw him jump clean over her.' Then the other voice said, 'That was thanks to the prick you gave him with your spear.' And then I remembered that just before the bull leapt, I saw something flash. But I was nigh to fainting, and my ankle caused me dreadful pain. Grandmother supported it in her hand as the young soldier carried me. Directly he spoke, I knew he was not a Greek—— "

Theophila paused again, and softly kissed Lydia's head.

"Grandmother says he sprang right across the street," she continued, "and drove his spear into the bull's haunch—and if he had not, I must have been killed, for the bull was tired, and would have been sure to strike me with his hoof, if the pain of the wound had not made him leap so high that he never touched me. Clodianus—that is this beautiful young soldier, your father," continued Theophila, "laid me on a couch, and when the doctor came, he went away; but he used to come every day to ask how I was, and —and so—— "

"Woe worth the day! You loved him, and forsook your nation for him!" said Susannah, and began again to bemoan herself and curse the day of her birth. "Nothing I or the Elders of the Synagogue could say could prevail with you; but you, pleading the example of Chilion, who wedded Ruth—— "

"While she was an idolater, mother," said Theophila, eagerly. "For is it not written, 'Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people and to her gods'? Yet the Elders were wroth, and cursed me and cast me out. And truly I have not prospered. My two children died, and my people cast me out. Yet how could I give up Clodianus, my heart's desire and the light of my eyes? And he was good to me while I was with him at Philippi, until he was ordered to Rome in charge of Aristarchus the Christian. And he did not return, and it is now three years, and I have heard nothing—nothing till now. But now, oh, my Lydia, my dove, my love—now I have found him—and we shall see him! Oh, my Lydia! We shall see him!" Theophila passionately embraced Lydia, who said, as soon as she had recovered her breath—

"When shall we see father, mother?"

"My darling! She calls him 'father' already, before she has ever seen him!" cried Theophila, rapturously.

"Are you mad, Theophila," asked Susannah, "that you thus deceive yourself? Do you think he will be glad to see you, or that he will receive you with anything but curses? If we have been rightly informed, and this is the same Clodianus, will he be glad, think you, to welcome us? He is come to promotion—made an adjutant—or whatever they call it

here—in the Praetorian Band. He has pleased the Emperor with his good looks—may they wither!"

"Hush, hush, mother! God forbid!" cried Theophila. "Do not curse him—it kills me to hear you curse him." She was pale and panting; she sank back upon her seat, and pressed her hands upon her heart.

"There—there—I will not curse him, if he is kind to you, my child," said Susannah. "But consider, he has caught the eye of the Emperor, who will have him in constant attendance. That is why we have never seen him. We have watched the Praetorians changing guard, and gone round to all the stations of the Urban Cohorts and of the Watch; but we never thought of the Palace, and if Calpurnius Crassus had not happened to mention the name of Clodianus, as among those he would like news of, we might have been long enough before we found him."

"We must have seen him sooner or later," said Theophila. "He was not yet made cornicularius at Stella's Shows, or I should have seen him. I noticed every face of those around the Emperor. But now we can easily get a message to him."

"Alas, alas! my child! He is sure to have got another wife by this time," said Susannah. "These Gentiles—who have not the fear of God before their eyes, but do after the abominations of the nations of

Canaan—what is a wife to them? If he had wanted you, could he not have written a letter, and sent it by some of our people?"

"Perhaps he did, mother, and it missed us on our journey," said Theophila. "It is now more than two years since we departed from Thessalonica. I abode full nine months at Puteoli, hoping to find Clodianus when he should embark to return to Macedonia, not knowing that he had been enrolled in the Praetorian Band. And why should he turn from us? Will he not be pleased to see his child? It vexed him when the others died—and, as for another wife, I will hear it from himself—and we do not come to ask him for money——"

"No, indeed. I thank my God we have enough," said Susannah. "Isaac the Banker will give me credit at twelve per cent.—a hard bargain he drove with me; but he swore by Father Abraham that twenty-four, and even forty-eight per cent. is given in Rome for ready money advanced on reversions and legacies—and that is better than being put to such straits as I was put to when I found you not at Puteoli. But for the young lady who gave me a denarius at Aricia, I had not had wherewithal to buy me a morsel of bread till I came to the City. And indeed the Elders were wroth with me that I would come after you, and especially because I took the child; but

albeit you are cut off from the Congregation, my bowels yearn after you, and after the child, though her father be a heathen. And I must needs follow you wheresoever you go, until we return to our own people——"

"I shall never go back, mother," said Theophila, "unless my husband goes with me."

"Pshaw!" said Susannah, "you call him your husband; but if he chooses to repudiate you, what remedy have you?"

"My father was a Greek of Thessalonica—a free city," said Theophila. "And Domitian, I have heard, has made a law against divorce. I know I am grown lean and ugly; but when I see Clodianus I shall be well again, and recover my looks—he loved me once, mother, though you won't believe it—and when he sees the child, she will melt his heart——"

Theophila broke down again, and wept pitifully, and Susannah, angry as she was at her obstinate folly in clinging to Clodianus, wept with her, and refrained from telling her that, the new law notwithstanding, Clodianus had only to send her a bill of divorce, renouncing his claim on her dowry, and he would be free.

CHAPTER VI.

CLODIANUS.

During the last few months Clodianus had often seen Chione. He had spoken with her at the corners of streets, or within the door of the slaves' quarter, or coming out of a temple, or going to a shop—there was sure to be one of these meetings every few days. Chione had never yet made an appointment with him—something warned her that this young Praetorian was not a person to be played with. He appeared to her the symbol of brute force—of force akin to the blind forces of nature—and she feared him, as we fear an earthquake or a tempest, which we know cannot spare us if it would. Perhaps in her keen preception of the sheer vital energy of the man, she underrated his intelligence. Clodianus was not a fool—his cunning had not often been called for, because his vital energy usually sufficed to gain him his ends—that was all; a hundred years later, he would have stood an excellent chance of being Emperor of Rome.

One evening, about this time, Chione, after an

angry scene with Crassus, ran out of the house, her heart all on fire with anger and wounded pride, and the sense of her servile condition, the contempt of her master, and contempt of herself for feeling *his* contempt so keenly, and mad longings to punish him—with all these passions tearing at her heart like the dogs of Hecate, Chione rushed out, not sure whether she would throw herself at once from the Aemilian Bridge, or first get her fortune told in the Circus. Clodianus was lurking about, hoping to see her. He had bribed one of Crassus's slaves, and the fellow had told him that Chione was gone out—down to the City. Had not Clodianus met her? She had got on a black cloak, as if she did not wish to be seen, and she looked as if she had gone to meet somebody.

Clodianus scowled, and the servant hastened to add, "Of course, I mean to meet *you*." He went on to inform Clodianus that Chione had had a great row with the master—in the library—you could hear them outside. An awful row—going on at each other like bridge-beggars!

Clodianus hung about, and, warned of the black cloak, detected Chione as she stole round the corner of the house, and made her turn back with him.

"Where have you been?" he asked. "I have been waiting for you an hour!"

"Where have I been? I know where I wish I had been—and that's to the Aemilian Bridge!" said Chione. "But I've had my fortune told instead, by a woman in the Circus——"

"For the Gods' sake, don't go there to have it told!" said Clodianus. "Those women there are all thieves, or worse! Go to a regular astrologer, if you want your fortune told—not to a beggarly impostor of the Circus!"

"She told me I had had a quarrel with my lover, and that he was a person in favour at Court, and entirely devoted to me," said Chione, with a hollow laugh.

"That's the style," said Clodianus. "A Knight is the least they promise you. Why are you in such a hurry? I hear you have quarrelled with Crassus—perhaps you want to go and make it up with him?"

"I will never make it up! I will never forgive him!" said Chione, sobbing hysterically.

"I am glad to hear that," said Clodianus. "I always thought him a sneaking fellow myself, and wondered how you could put up with him."

"I must put up with him! He is my master, and I am his slave," said Chione, passionately—"though I was free-born. But he only jeers at me when I tell him that I was not born a slave, but free, and of noble

parents, in the Isle of Cythera, and was carried off when scarce three years old by Corsican pirates, who slew my father and my mother, and sold me at the mart at Pagasae—for so one of my companions, older than myself, told me afterwards. He knows this; yet he loves to abuse me——"

"I will get Caesar to ask you of him," said Clodianus, "and I will make you my wife; for you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and worthy to marry an Emperor! Only say you hate him, and I will do it! Crassus dare not refuse Caesar a favour! Do you hesitate, Chione? Bah! I always thought you had a sneaking kindness for the white-livered dog! Just like a woman—you fancy he cares about you—you are proud of making an impression on that dried fig he calls his heart—and he is laughing at you all the time——"

"Do I not know it? And do you think I love him?" said Chione. "Doesn't the remembrance of a thousand sneers accuse him to me? Does he not—just to make me feel what I am—threaten to crucify me?"

"Then let me ask for you, and marry me. You shall have even finer dresses than he gives you," said the Praetorian.

"Dresses? Do you think it is for them?" cried Chione. "See here!"—she tore her silken robe from

her shoulder—"let me go in sheepskin!" she cried, "if only it never was his!"

"Well, I will ask you of Domitian. He has several times lately bade me ask a favour," said Clodianus. "After all, who is Crassus? If it was his cousin, now—*he's* a proper man, if you like! But a puny, sharp-nosed fellow like Crassus, who can't eat a good dinner without having a fit of indigestion after it! Bah! A fig for such a fellow! Just feel my arm—his isn't like that, I warrant you? You don't often see one like mine. When I was at Thessalonica, I was the model for a Hercules that a statuary there was making for the Politarch. Come, Chione, look pleasant, and give me a kiss in pledge."

He had drawn her into the vestibule of a house, where they were somewhat sheltered from observation. She looked at him for a moment—then suddenly kissed him, saying, "Agreed!" and, turning, fled up the street towards the house of Crassus.

The summer heats had set in with more than the usual fierceness of summer. Instead of the cloudless blue, growing day by day more intensely blue, and rising higher and higher into the empyrean heavens themselves, the City was overhung by a canopy of red mist, dispersed from time to time by thunderstorms, but always gathering again. Every day, the streets

of Rome grew more empty; every day, streams of carriages and litters choked the gates—every one was going to the hills, or to the sea-baths. Most of the Courts were closed—but the baleful face of Regulus sometimes looked out from a litter, as he came in from Albula to conduct the prosecution of some suspected person. That livid countenance was a fit symbol of the unwholesome season—Regulus might have been the high-priest of Robigo, hollow-eyed goddess of blight and mildew! As his litter passed over the burning pavement, the few loiterers in the New Forum got up from the seats under the porticos, and followed to the Court—their sandals echoing through the empty square. By the Kalends of June there was no one left but shopkeepers and slaves.

News of Tertia's condition was sent daily to Piso, and he came up to see her as often as he could leave Albanum. Some one had hinted to Domitian that these repeated sicknesses in Piso's family were perhaps a convenient excuse for non-attendance at Court—perhaps also intended to pave the way for a request to leave the City. Symmachus, it was reported, had said that the only chance was a voyage to Egypt. Once in Egypt, what might not a man of Piso's vast wealth and aspiring temper do? He might get the Alexandrians to proclaim him Emperor, seize the corn-ships, slip across to Ephesus, raise Asia—cross to

Greece, and march down on Rome through Cisalpine Gaul! Certus, who ventured to sketch to Domitian this little scheme for a revolution, got for his pains a look from those lurking eyes which made him feel as though cold water was being poured down his back.

A day or two afterwards, as Piso sat at supper with the Emperor, in a room whose terrace overlooked the Alban Lake—Crassus, Parthenius, and Veiento being also at table, with the beautiful, effeminate Spendophorus, Domitian's armour-bearer, and the young eunuch Earinus, in attendance upon them—Domitian said suddenly—

"I hear, Lucius Calpurnius, that you wish to take a voyage to Egypt. Does not Rome agree with you?"

"The physicians, Sir, advise a voyage for my daughter, who is dangerously ill," replied Piso. Crassus, in the act of adding some Spanish sauce to a mullet, which had but just expired, poured the sauce more slowly from the golden boat, as he strained his ears to catch Piso's words. "The voyage, however, is not recommended until the north wind sets in, and I have myself but little hope of the child surviving so long."

"Is she, then, really so ill?" asked Domitian, suspiciously. "Your paternal fears perhaps exaggerate——"

"I trust it is so, Sir," replied Piso; "but to me she appears to grow worse daily."

"A cunning answer," thought Crassus. "He sees it is of no use to try to get away."

Nor did Domitian take Piso's reply in good faith. "When I spoke of it to him," he said to Domitia, "he replied that his child cannot live till the Equinox. I must consult Ascletario, as to what is likely to take place at the Equinox. Is Clodianus on guard without?"

"He was there when I came in," replied Domitia.

"Fetch Clodianus, Gyrinus," said the Emperor to the great-headed boy, who had fallen asleep on a tiger-skin spread before the imperial couch, and did not awake till he had had an apple thrown at him.

CHAPTER VII.

CLODIANUS ASKS A BOON OF CAESAR.

Everybody about the Palace allowed that Clodianus was a young man of very remarkable beauty. His beauty was not the Adonis-like softness of Spendophorus, but the well-knit grace of a victor in the Olympic Games, for his figure was rather that of Meleager than of Hercules. The fine proportions of his shoulders and chest were brought out by the lorica—a thick leather jerkin, covered with scale armour, which he wore, as an unusual precaution, by Domitian's orders, instead of the usual brass thorax. Greaves and caligae, and a helmet with a crest of horsehair, dyed scarlet, completed his armour. His face, rather square than oval, was very beautiful, but it already bore marks of strong passions. At present, the expression promised strength, courage, easy good-nature; but if the well-shaped nose grew but a little thicker, the lips but a little coarser, the cheeks a little broader, and the brow a little more

prominent above the eyes—which were light, and too small for the face—the good-natured expression would be changed to one of mere brutal ferocity. Indeed, to an observer experienced in reading the human countenance, it would have been already clear that this young adjutant of the Guard would not ask too nicely against whom he must turn his sword. But now, as he stood upon the terrace, waiting for Caesar to speak, he was a model of manly strength, his muscles not yet developed into the brutal conspicuousness of a gladiator's.

"Where did you tell me you were, before you came to the City, and what was your Legion?"

"I was of the Eighth, and was stationed at Philippi, Caesar."

"You came hither as one of the guards of Aristarchus the Christian, whom we lately put to death for his crimes?"

"Yes, Caesar."

"Then I saw you, and asked you of your country, and you said that you were of Reate?"

"Yes, Caesar."

"And I asked you if you would enlist with the Praetorians?"

"Yes, Caesar."

"And now I have had you made a cornicularius, and will promote you still more if I find you worthy,"

said Domitian, who had never taken his eyes off Clodianus. "And when I send for prisoners to speak with them, I will have you to stand outside the door. And, hark you, Clodianus, look narrowly at all the persons whom you admit—*all*, I say, for there are some that you would swear love me, who all the while seek occasion to murder me. Such is the miserable estate of princes! Men I have spared, and loaded with benefits, only wait till they may strike at me unawares! But, by the favour of Pallas, I have discovered their malice. And it is worth a man's while to serve me faithfully." Here he paused, and eyed Clodianus from under his brows, scratching the pimples' on his forehead, while he watched the Praetorian to see the effect of this hint. "So now," he continued, "what shall be done for you? You are a goodly man to look upon, and a strong, and you are of Reate, the country of my blessed Father, now among the Gods—did not I myself enrol him and my brother Titus among them? And I wish you well, and would do something for you, that you may see how princes can reward fidelity. Speak —shall I give you a wife? or a horse? or a Dacian prisoner for a slave?"

"So please you, Caesar," replied Clodianus, "I already have a horse, and two slaves to clean my armour and attend upon me, and more would but

eat up my pay, and rob me when my back was turned. But for a wife——" Clodianus looked sheepish, and hung his head.

"Speak up, man!" said Domitian, and Domitia, who had been yawning as though terribly bored, turned suddenly and looked at Clodianus.

"So please you, Caesar, I was married to a little Jewish girl at Thessalonica," said Clodianus, in some confusion, which increased as the Emperor laughed aloud. "A nice little thing she was at first; but she grew tiresome by reason of her religion. A beast of a religion is the Jewish, may it please you, and gives him that professes it no rest either by night or by day; for there is scarce a single thing that a man could care to do, nor in particular anything fit for a man to eat, but they bring you some sentence from a greasy Rabbi, to say you shall be cast into Tartarus for it. So, when I was ordered to go with Aristarchus—and the Christians, so please you, are another kind of Jew, but six hundred times worse than the real ones—so, when I was ordered to go with him, and came here to Rome, whence I had been absent since I was a boy—for my father went——"

"Never mind thy father. Get on with thy story," said Domitian.

"So then, so please you, I thought I would stay here."

"Thou art an honest fellow," said Domitian. "So then thou wilt not have a wife?"

"So please you, Caesar, I did not say I would not have a wife——" said Clodianus.

"Then thou wilt? Speak, man! By Hercules! thou art the mountain in labour!"

"So please you——" began Clodianus, and stopped, as though afraid or ashamed to speak.

"Speak, man!" said Domitian.

"So please you, Caesar, I cannot have the woman I should like, and there is no other I care to make my wife—and for that matter, I can do well enough without one."

"Is the woman you want married already?" asked Domitian.

"No, so please you."

"Then why can you not have her? Is she of too illustrious birth?"

"No, so please you."

"By the Gods, then why do you make this mystery? Who is she?"

"May I be your sacrifice, Caesar, but I would I had never spoke of her! No good will come of it—I shall but get myself into disgrace——"

"Confusion seize thee, ass that thou art!" said Domitian, angrily. "Answer me this instant! Who is the woman?"

"So please you, she is a slave-girl of the illustrious Publius Crassus," replied Clodianus, apparently with the utmost reluctance.

"He shall sell her to me, and I will give her to thee. What is her name?" said Domitian.

"May I be your sacrifice, Caesar, but he will not sell her. He likes her too well himself," said Clodianus.

"By Hercules! if I ask him, he will sell her. Is she so beautiful? What is her name?"

Domitia, who had leaned her head on her hand, so as to shade her eyes, held her breath for Clodianus's reply.

"Her name is Chione," said Clodianus, almost in a whisper, scared at the success of his wishes. "She is beautiful, and there is no other I care to marry —but I am not one to break my heart for a woman," he added. "Women are always civil to me; but——"

"Thy inches and thy good looks obtain thee their favour—which, by Hercules! thy coldness does not merit!" said Domitian.

"Oh, for that matter, so please you, I am not, as you might say, an icicle, or a Stoic," said the cornicularius; "only there are always plenty of women to be had, and I could never break my heart for any particular one. But Chione is another matter. I never saw a woman like her, for either beauty or

courage—she fears nothing; and to look at she is like a Goddess!"

"And does she smile on *thee?*" asked Domitian, but with somewhat less of friendliness in his tone.

"I have but seen her some thrice or so. It was when you deigned, Caesar, to send me with messages to the illustrious Crassus, and we spoke but on indifferent matters. Yet I think she does not hate me."

"So she is a favourite slave of Crassus—a Greek, by her name—and accomplished?"

"Oh, surely, Caesar! One of the tricliniarii told me she sings to the lute like a sphinx."

"Ha! ha! a siren, thou meanest," said Domitian, laughing. "Now go—and remember what I have bid thee."

Then, when Clodianus had withdrawn, he turned suddenly on Domitia, and grasping her slender wrist, said savagely—

"How dare you look so at that fellow? I saw you ogling him! I'll have him crucified, if I ever catch you looking at him so again!"

"Even Caesar dare not do that—he is a citizen," said Domitia, boldly.

"Ha! are you so bold?" he said, gripping her till she flushed with pain, though she would not cry out. "Beware! Remember Paris! Do you think

because I took you again to my pulvinar, that I will forgive you *any*thing?"

"Have not *I* forgiven *you* a thousand times?" said Domitia, flashing her splendid black eyes upon him. "I will not tell you of all you have done; but did you not put me to public disgrace just to make the people think ill of me? They always loved me for my father Corbulo's sake—who led our armies so often to victory." At this home-thrust, Domitian blinked, and relaxed his grip of her wrist. "Did you not, in order to make me unpopular, have poor Paris murdered on the open street? Did you not put me away—pretending to do it on account of Paris, when all the while it was only that you might take Julia, your brother's daughter? And so you have done, never knowing your own mind—for, first, you refused Julia, when she was still unmarried. Then you allowed *me* to marry Aelius. Then you took me from him, and then you all of a sudden discovered that you were madly in love with Julia! And when you had put me away and taken her—well, she died—by your fault—before you had time to find out that it was somebody else you wanted, and not her. And so you took me back, because you had lost her! You never cared for me! And now a common soldier's report of a slave-girl whom you have never seen inflames you! I am a wretched woman, married to a monster

of unfaithfulness! But I'll bear it no longer—these waters shall drown my sorrows!"

She broke from him, and made as though she would fling herself into the lake below. But Domitian held her back, and as though the sudden access of furious grief was spent, Domitia sank down on the terrace, and sobbed—or seemed to sob—with her head on her knee, moaning that she would live no longer.

"Little fool!" said Domitian, "I was jesting—it was only to make you jealous. This Chione is, I'll be bound, a white-skinned, insipid Greek. You know I can't live without you! Come, no more tears."

"Will you swear never to see her?" asked Domitia, lifting up her head—in the shadow of the balcony, Domitian did not perceive that her eyes were quite dry.

"Oh yes; I'll swear it," he said.

"Swear by Minerva."

"No; she must not be invoked on such matters," he said uneasily. "I swear by Praenestine Fortune!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GOLDEN BOWL IS BROKEN.

And still, day by day, Tertia grew weaker. Every time that her father or her grandmother came up to see her, she received them with a more languid smile; every day the expression of her face grew less and less childlike, and that most heartrending of all looks on a sick face—the look of premature age, came out more and more plainly.

It added greatly to the anguish of Aemilia and Calpurnia that Tertia persisted in talking of death. She seemed to have stored up in her memory every word she had ever heard her elders speak on that dread subject—words, perhaps, uttered carelessly and with no suspicion in the speaker's mind that the child was listening.

"That is a sign of death," she would say. "I know it, because I heard grandmother say so, when Laurentia died." And then again she would ask, "What *is* death, mother? What is it like? To me

it seems to be like a windy night—dark and cold, and no stars, and a great wind that drives you hither and thither in the dark. And then there is the river, where the ghosts are—and the dreadful gate—and Cerberus—when the dogs bark at night, I think it must be like his barking—only, mother, why *need* people die?"

It was terrible to Aemilia to hear Tertia's piping childish voice talking of these things. Her horror of the Invisible World seemed to increase with her weakness. Some image of Cerberus, with a serpent coiled round his body, and his three mouths gaping and threatening, which she had seen in the garden of a villa at Baiae, had taken possession of her childish imagination, and nothing could reassure her.

"These are the things the poets said. After all, they did not know," Aemilia would say.

"But how could they make a statue, unless it was true? You can't make a statue of *nothing*," Tertia would reply. "And when we die, we must go *somewhere*, you know. And then there are the Manes—why do you put lettuces and eggs for them, and flowers and lamps, if they do not come back for them?"

This was so terrible to Aemilia, that out of sheer despair she yielded to the entreaties of Sabina, backed by Tryphosa—who now openly confessed to Aemilia

that she had long been a Christian. Sabina urged Aemilia to permit her to speak to Tertia of the Christian belief about death and the life after death; and Aemilia, though her upright soul shrank from concealing anything from Piso, could not help snatching at even this straw of comfort.

"If she is deceived, the Gods will surely forgive," she thought. "And Tertia is such a child. On my head be the sin, if it be a sin." And she said to Sabina, "Why may not this God of the Christians be a God hitherto unknown to us? There are many Gods without a name. There is 'The Voice that Spake'—he who warned Rome that the Gauls were coming. Surely we may give equal honours to this Announcer of Good Tidings, of whom you tell?"

Probably at the invitation of Sabina, Anacletus the Bishop came up to the Villa about this time. Aemilia, who had seen him once in the apartments of Flavius Clemens, was greatly touched by the kindness with which he asked for Tertia.

"I fear she is dying!" replied Aemilia, bursting into tears.

"And even if she is," he said, speaking with a grave authority, which impressed her in spite of herself, "even if she is, I am sent to you to bid you sorrow not as they that have no hope."

Tertia took so kindly to Anacletus—who was an

elderly man, of fatherly appearance—that Aemilia presently left them together, and returning to Sabina, gave way to her grief.

"Oh, Sabina!" she exclaimed, with tears. "She will surely die! I see it in her eyes! They are so large and transparent! And my mother-in-law told me before we came here that Ascletario the Astrologer foretold we should be in great peril about this time. I dreamed last night that Caius was dead in Athens. I saw him laid out on his bed, as plain as I see you now! And every night I dream of death and of tombs. I am always wandering among them—trying to find some monument; but I know not whose it is, and I awake in a cold sweat."

Meanwhile, Tertia, with the open-heartedness of childhood, when its confidence is once won, was prattling away to Anacletus about many things—especially asking him about these things which had caused her terror.

"Are you ever afraid—*very* much afraid?" she asked, those great transparent eyes which made her mother's heart ache fixed upon his face. "Or are people never afraid when they are old and wise?"

"I have often feared many things, my child, and there are still many that I fear," replied Anacletus. "But of what things do you speak?"

"Oh, of many!" said Tertia. "There was the

Procession of Bacchus at Baiae—I was very much afraid of *that*—especially after the dark woman came out of it. I have seen her since—here, in the City. I am afraid of her eyes. And then there are the Images. When I began to be ill, they used to come and stand round my bed, when I was asleep—but it was not a dream—they really were there, you know. But I am most afraid of Cerberus and the River of Fire. If I die, *must* I go in the boat, and pass Cerberus?"

"My child," said Anacletus, "if you die, your Heavenly Father will give His messengers charge over you."

"Who is my Heavenly Father? Is it Jove?" asked Tertia.

"It is the True Jupiter—the Great God of Heaven and Earth," said Anacletus. "He whom you call Jove is but a dark image of Him."

"Then is He greater than Jove himself?" asked Tertia, her eyes dilating.

"Yes," replied Anacletus. "He is greater and more holy. He is the Eternal God, yet is willing to be called our Father; for He loves us, and pities all mankind, so that He sent His only Son Jesus Christ to redeem us——"

"What is that?" asked Tertia.

"To deliver us from sin and from death," said

Anacletus. "JESUS CHRIST, when He was on earth, healed people's sicknesses; He loves little children, and when He was on earth, He took them in His arms, and blessed them, and said that they and such as they should come into His kingdom. Nothing is too small for Him, as nothing is too great for Him. He is the Good Shepherd. He said that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without our Heavenly Father——"

"If He cares for the sparrows, I suppose He would care for Pasht," said Tertia, thoughtfully.

"Who is Pasht?" asked Anacletus, rather troubled —for he knew Pasht only as the great Egyptian Diana.

"Pasht is my cat that the cruel kite killed," replied Tertia.

"Surely," said Anacletus, smiling very kindly on the child, "the tender mercies of God are over all His works. The young lions seek their meat from Him."

"Then He cares for the kites also?" said Tertia. "That is strange." And she sighed.

"These are but parts of His ways, my child," said Anacletus. "We cannot tell why He permits death and pain. It is for some good end we cannot understand, and He doth not willingly afflict us. He sent His dear Son to die for us."

"I wish JESUS CHRIST were on earth now," said

Tertia, thoughtfully. "I wish I could go to Him—I would ask Him to make me well."

A day or two after this, Tertia suddenly grew much worse. Symmachus was sent for in haste, and an urgent message reached Piso in the Senate. His sudden departure caused a great deal of whispering, and Veiento contrived to make it appear suspicious. Crassus was just then absent from Rome, and Veiento hinted that Crassus had sent for Piso. "These pretended illnesses," he added, "ought to deceive nobody."

Piso found Tertia lying on her bed near the open window. She was much distressed for breath at times, and plucked restlessly at the bed-clothes; but she often sank into sleep, or stupor, and lay for an hour at a time without moving. She recognized her father, and seemed pleased that he had come, but she did not speak.

When Symmachus arrived, he could only look very grave and murmur a few ambiguous phrases, which really meant that he could do nothing. Only an effort of nature could save a patient who was gone as far as this—and nature did not seem disposed to make that effort.

"If she were to rally," he said—but it was evident he did not think she would rally. Then Symmachus went away, desiring to be sent for if there was any change.

The women were all crying; but Tertia did not seem to notice it. The air was heavy and oppressive. As Aemilia sat fanning Tertia, she felt an overpowering drowsiness creep over her—a strange indifference, as it seemed to her, although the tears were still undried upon her cheeks, and her whole body shook with a nervous tremor. Cornelia sat there immovable, except when she wiped away the tears which welled from her eyes. But Calpurnia could not remain still. She wandered about the house, and about the garden. She went to Marcella on the terrace, and relieved her heart with a burst of weeping—then stole back, and sat down where Tertia could not see her. Then presently, up again—pacing to and fro on the terrace, in a fierce, active anguish of mind, which seemed to rack her body too.

Piso was sitting beside Tertia's bed, one of her little hands locked in his. As he sat there—his head resting on his other hand—Calpurnia felt awed, and repressed the sobs which rose in her throat every time Tertia stirred. After a while, Sabina brought them in some wine and raisins, and made them eat, enforcing her orders by signs, for she did not speak, lest she should disturb Tertia. Calpurnia knew that Marcellus was praying to his God in his own chamber. No doubt Aulus would pray too.

Just then, Tertia moved a little, half-opened

her eyes, and murmured, "Where is my brother Aulus?"

Sabina looked inquiringly at Piso, who said, "Yes; send for him."

Sabina went out softly. It was so still, that Calpurnia presently heard the steps of the messenger as he crossed the terrace. The scent of the roses and lilies came in through the window, heavy and sickly, and there was now and then a low rumble of distant thunder.

So several hours went by. The air grew still more oppressive, the clouds gathered, and a brief, heavy shower fell—the hailstones danced on the terrace, and rattled on the leaves of the trees. There were two or three flashes of lightning, and some sharp cracks of thunder; but the storm passed very soon, and the air was much lighter. A refreshing coolness came up from the moistened earth, and the sweet smell which follows after rain. Even Tertia seemed to be revived by it. She swallowed some broth, and fell into a quiet sleep, her long eyelashes resting on her cheek.

The afternoon was far advanced when Aulus came. He came in very softly, and sat down by Aemilia, and for a long while no one spoke or moved. Tryphosa was crouched on the floor at the foot of the bed. She first was aware of a change, and it was a movement *she* made which went like a rustle through the

room. So, at least, they all thought afterwards; but at the moment it seemed as though a sudden breeze breathed for an instant in the stillness.

Tertia was stirring—was awake. Her eyes had unclosed. Before any one could speak, she sat up, and stretched out her arms, while her eyes wandered from one to the other, as though she knew not to whom to turn. Aemilia placed her arm round the child's shoulders, to support her. She thought, poor mother, that Tertia's eyes rested on *her*. But there came an instant change. A strange greyness spread over the little face—a look of trouble and surprise—and then, with a smile, Tertia fell back on her mother's arm, and lay looking up at the ceiling, drawing long, slow breaths, which ended in a little sob.

They were all gathered round the bed. When that sob caught Tertia's breath, no one thought it was the last, till, as they waited and waited in vain for her to breathe again, Aemilia uttered a loud cry, and put her mouth close to Tertia's, and cried again, "My child! my child! let me receive thy last breath!"

CHAPTER IX.

VALE AETERNUM!

It was Piso who closed Tertia's eyes, and, standing beside the bed, called her thrice by name. The attendants took up the cry, and in loud distressful accents, which seemed to Calpurnia to rend the very heavens, called, "Tertia! Tertia!" It was the first time that Calpurnia had ever heard the *conclamatio*, that agonized cry with which mourners strove to stay the passing soul. "Tertia! Tertia!" they cried; and then, as there was no answer, nor any that regarded, "Ave! Vale!"—mingling these outcries and farewells with sobs and tears, till Piso put them all out (even Cornelia, who wept bitterly), and, shutting the door and drawing the curtain, went to where Aemilia lay prone, her dishevelled hair falling in disorder around her. Piso spoke softly to her, but she only answered by a long-drawn shuddering sigh. He knelt beside her, and, lifting her by main force, raised her to a sitting posture, his arms supporting her, her shoulders resting against his knee.

"Aemilia!" he whispered; "dearest wife!" He put aside the long dank tresses of her hair, and kissed her hands, as she pressed them on her eyes—the hot tears fell on his face like rain. "Aemilia! Aemilia!" he said; but he knew not what else to say. He dared not say, "You still have me," lest she should answer, "For how long?" "Aemilia, my dearest wife, you have another daughter," he said at last.

As she appeared to be almost fainting, he took up the fan with which they had been fanning Tertia. But Aemilia exclaimed, "Not that!" and suddenly, though with difficulty, rose to her feet, and, leaning heavily on Piso, stood a moment by the couch, gazing down on the little face, on which so awful a shadow rested. "Oh, my Tertia!" she said, stretching out her hands like a person groping in the dark, and, with a smothered cry, she fell forwards on the bed.

When Aemilia came to herself, it was evening. She was in her own room, and Piso sat watching her.

"Do not rise, Aemilia," he said, as she seemed about to spring up.

"I must go to see that what is right is being done," she said.

"My mother has done it—with our kind Sabina," said Piso; "we can never repay Sabina."

Aemilia began to weep, but more gently. Piso

knelt down by the bed, and put his arms round her, and so continued a long while, neither of them speaking a word.

Although Piso maintained a calm exterior, it was easy to see by his pale countenance and hollow eyes how deep was his sorrow. Often, in the course of the next few hours, Tryphosa, going in to the chamber of death, found her master standing there, gazing upon the uncovered face.

Piso had insisted upon removing Tertia's body to his own house. This was done upon the second night after her death. The little corpse, dressed in white, and covered with flowers, was carried out of the villa on a funeral couch by the vespillones, Piso and his mother walking behind all the way. He would not permit Aemilia or Calpurnia to come down to the City that night. They followed the sad procession to the brow of the hill; but there Piso forbade them to come any farther, and, commending his wife and daughter to the care of Marcellus and Sabina, went on down the hill, the torches glaring redly among the trees. Then the little group went slowly and sadly back—the hot resinous scent of the torches still hanging on the air of the summer night, and mingling with the rank vapours of the marshes, while the summer lightning played over the Alban Mount. Calpurnia thought that the world smelt of death.

Next day, they too went home. The vestibule of Piso's house was hung with black, and branches of cypress were fastened to the door-posts, while the hired mourners stood on guard. Aemilia had nerved herself for the sight which she knew would meet her. In accordance with the ancient custom, the corpse was placed on a couch in the ostium, so that none could cross the threshold without passing close beside it. Here—the little feet towards the door, as just ready to depart—lay Tertia's body, on an ivory couch, decked with flowers; beside it sat Tryphosa and the household servants. Piso, Cornelia, and Julius were waiting to receive Aemilia and Calpurnia, and, as soon as the doors were closed, Aulus came out from the atrium, and silently kissed Aemilia's hand.

Through that day, many of Piso's friends came to condole with him. Others also came, whom Piso saw less gladly—even Regulus intruded on his grief. Poor little Tertia received more visitors when she was laid out for her burial than she had had in her whole life. The clients came in throngs—this was too good an opportunity to be missed of paying a perfectly safe compliment to our illustrious Patron. They encumbered the ostium with their mourning togas and their attitudes of decent grief, until Aemilia could endure the intrusion no longer, and, under the pretext of preparations for the funeral, had the great doors

closed. Then, for the last few hours of the day, she sat with Calpurnia and Cornelia beside her dead. The house was darkened, and only the light of the lamps fell on the bier. A strange fancy tormented Calpurnia all the day. It seemed to her that, while Tertia, who used to be so full of life, lay as still and rigid on her couch as the ancestral images in the atrium, those images themselves had undergone a change. It was as though the life which had left Tertia had passed into them—quickening them in some way which it eluded the senses to define. Their waxen breasts did not heave, and yet there was a stir somewhere within them. Never again did they seem to Calpurnia to be things without life, but rather things in which life lurked hidden. At intervals the attendants raised again the soul-piercing cry of the *conclamatio*, and called "Tertia! Tertia!" with voices that rang hollow through the farthest recesses of the house. And then, indeed, it seemed to Calpurnia, crouching and stopping her ears, trying to shut out those terrible sounds—that she heard them echoing through the dusky corridors of Hades, and mingling with the sluggish splash of Acheron's cold waters.

The body had been perfumed, the obole placed under the tongue; everything was ready for Tertia's departure. The flute-players and trumpeters and the

mourning women were ready. Piso himself, with his son Julius, his nephew Quintus Arulenus, and Aulus Atticus, intended to carry the bier. Vipstanus Messala, too, was there; but Piso had requested his friends not to make a too great demonstration of their regard.

When all was ready, Piso led Aemilia into the ostium, and, desiring the mourners and the servants to retire for a short time, said, as he held her hand—

"Aemilia, we gave each other this child, and some part of ourselves dies with her. Let us remember this, that the recollection of it may make death easier to ourselves; and so let one stroke heal another."

The deep emotion, which Piso could control but not conceal, shook Aemilia's very soul, and drove back the torrent of her tears, as a strong wind drives back the waves. The spectacle of a profounder grief than even her own hushed her, and the shadow of a still greater calamity seemed to fall across Tertia's bier, and silence all her weeping.

"We live between the two torches," said Piso. "The light of all nuptial torches, my Aemilia, must at last be extinguished at the funeral pile."

Aemilia trembled like a reed in the wind—she knew that Piso was trying to fortify her for the inevitable day which must surely part each from other.

"Let us take our farewell of our dear child," said Piso, and, still holding fast Aemilia's hand, he bent and kissed Tertia's cold brow.

As Aemilia, with a fire in her heart, clutched his hand convulsively, and tried to restrain the sobs which she felt must tear her very breast open if she gave them their way, there came a sudden loud knock upon the outer door. Aemilia sprang back, rigid as stone—even Piso started up from that farewell kiss. The knocking was repeated, and the servants, with Midas in front, appeared in the doorway of the atrium.

"Open!" said Piso.

Midas crossed the ostium, passing reverently by the bier. He drew up the great bolts from their sockets, and unhooked the iron bars, in his confusion letting them fall with a mighty clang, as he threw open the doors. The crowd of clients and many other persons who wished to pay Piso the respect of attending his daughter's funeral could be seen without, their black garments dimly visible by the light of the torches they carried. They had evidently made way for the person who had knocked. He stepped at once across the threshold, and, throwing back the lappet of his toga, with which he had covered his head, disclosed the features of Crassus, whom they had all supposed to be away in Tuscany. Perhaps he had never appeared to so great advantage. His mourning

garments became him, and gave him a dignity with which his usual splendid attire had never invested him. The gravity of the occasion, too, seemed to have communicated itself to him—at any rate, there was no trace of that lurking sneer which so often made his face repulsive. The death of a little child affords but small opportunities to the cynic, and Crassus appeared sobered, and, for almost the first time in Piso's experience of him, really serious.

"Lucius," he said, without even the formality of a salutation, "I am newly returned to the City, and am come to claim my right as your near kinsman to assist in carrying our beloved and lamented Tertia to the pyre."

It was impossible to refuse. Piso could only reply, "I thank you, Publius, for this mark of kindness."

Just then, Crassus perceived young Quintus Rusticus among the company, and whispered to Piso, "Lucius, one word with you."

Piso took him across the atrium into the tablinum, and stood waiting for him to speak.

"We are scarcely private here," said Crassus—only a heavy curtain divided this room from the atrium. "However"—here he whispered—"what I have to say is only to beg you not to let Quintus appear as a bearer. Let him lower his head and follow, by all means, but the bearers are more observed. It is

fortunate I came. I suppose Messala is to be the fourth?"

"No; my ward Aulus is the fourth," said Piso.

"By Hercules! is he really? Are you wise? Well —perhaps it may be the best policy, after all."

He stood a moment in thought, his right elbow propped in his left hand, biting his thumb. The light of the single lamp which hung from the ceiling fell on his lean, dark face, and on the books and papers scattered about the tablinum.

"A scholar's retreat," said Crassus, raising his head, and glancing at these things. Then—as if he had suddenly remembered that speech on everyday subjects was out of place—he added hastily, "But the learning of the past must give way before so present a grief as this. Then it is arranged—you, I, Julius, and young Atticus are the bearers? And pray, my dearest Lucius, keep young Rusticus out of sight!"

The great doors of the ostium had not been re-closed. The cool evening air came in through the doorway, and gently blew the flame of the lamps inside, and of the torches. All the servants had assembled at the doors leading out of the atrium, together with the freedmen of Piso and of his father, and as Piso and Crassus crossed the atrium, all these followed, until the great hall was full. The ladies, in black robes, and with their hair unbound, were already

in the ostium—carrying dresses, toys, and trinkets which had belonged to Tertia, and were to be cast into the flames with her body. Tryphosa, her eyes red with weeping, carried the little urn which contained the ashes of Pasht—it had been one of Tertia's last requests that they should repose near her own. Piso, Crassus, Julius, and Aulus, took their places, and as they laid their hands on the poles of the couch, the trumpeters, standing on the threshold, blew a long and melancholy blast, the flute-players breathed a slow and solemn air on the right-handed flutes, and the mourning women took up the funeral hymn to this accompaniment. Close behind the bier came the chief mourners—Aemelia, leaning on Messala's arm, Calpurnia with Quintus, while Cornelia, who had declined any support, walked firmly alone in the middle of the little rank of mourners, her long grey hair falling to her waist. She looked like an ancient priestess, or like the Cumaean Sibyl herself, her tall form towering among the other women—she seemed of another age, and another mould. People came out of their houses at the sound of the music, and stood in their doors to see the funeral pass.

The procession went by the Sacred Way, along the Forum, now silent and almost empty. The columns of the temples and porticos looked like the tree-trunks of a dark grove. The huge mass of statuary in the

centre was the equestrian statue of Domitian, trampling on the River Rhine. Piso saw it, and even in that moment, bitterly remembered that just here—where stood this lying trophy—Curtius in ancient days cast himself into the gulf. Crassus saw it, and looked up to where the Capitol lifted its crown of temples into the sky of night. The moon, just risen, touched the long wall of the sacred enclosure, adorned with statues of heroes and kings, gleamed cold on the high front of the Tabularium, and called out of the darkness the great statue of the Thunderer, on the column above the Tarpeian Rock. That was a thought of evil omen—Crassus shuddered, and turned away his eyes —only to see the gray walls of the Mamertine Prison glimmering above the Forum.

Up the steep slope of the Quirinal they went, and on, by the Way of Fortune—where sweet odours came wafted from the Gardens of Sallust—to the Colline Gate, and so out on to the Nomentine Way, where was the sepulchre of the Pisos.

It was a vast circular tower, rising from a quadrangular base. By the light of the torches, only the great features of the outline could be seen—the conical roof, crowned with a flame, towering awful among the pale summer stars, and the open door, out of which streamed a dim light.

The funeral pyre was prepared, the fir, the pine,

and the oak laid in order. The attendants who had gone on before, had stuck their torches in the ground, between the cypress-trees, and the space occupied by the pyre was lighted up by a lurid glare which showed every interstice of the wood, every wrinkle in the crumpled paper stuffed in below, and shining red on the lower branches of the cypresses, left all else wrapped in a deeper gloom. Other tombs rose near —their dark shapes seeming to keep watch beside the way, and to shut in the little group of mourners from all the world. Yet some strangers were present—persons who had had the curiosity to follow, but who stood afar off, and did not intrude upon the mourners.

The bearers set down the bier, and Piso opened Tertia's eyes—for the eyes of the dead must not be hid from heaven. The bier was once more sprinkled with perfumes, and anointed with unguents, and then Cornelia stepped forward and gave the last kiss. Julius followed, weeping bitterly—so blinded by his tears, that he stumbled and fell on his knees beside the pile. And then, trembling so that but for Aulus's hand supporting her, she would have fallen, Calpurnia went to take her last farewell. Every hour and moment of Tertia's little life rushed through her memory, crying out, Is this the end? Is this the end? "It cannot be true, Aulus! Oh, let them wait—perhaps she is only asleep!" she exclaimed,

almost beside herself. If Aulus had not held her back, she would have thrown herself upon the bier.

Crassus was the next, and even at that moment, the sight of him bending over Tertia dried up Aemilia's tears. But Crassus preserved the same mournful dignity which he had shown throughout. He kissed Tertia twice, and, turning away, stood on the other side of the bier, where the shadows were deepest.

And now the last dreadful moment was at hand for Aemilia, and Piso led her forward. But nature gave way—before Aemilia could lay on Tertia's breast the hair she had cut off, and press her lips to the little face—so awful with its mysterious half-opened eyes—merciful oblivion swept between her and thought and pain, and she fainted in Piso's arms. He carried her a little apart, and laid her on the ground, with her head upon Tryphosa's knee, and then returning to the pile, kissed his little daughter—looked on her for a moment by the light of the torch he held, and kissed her again. Then, turning his head away—his face set and stern—he laid the torch to the pile.

As soon as the fire took hold, Cornelia, Calpurnia, and the rest threw into it the garments and toys which they had brought—with perfumes, myrrh, frankincense, and cassia, and the cup out of which Tertia used to drink, and her shoes.

Piso had not been able to command his voice

sufficiently to utter the usual prayer for a favouring wind; but a breeze sprang up, and the flames and smoke, rising high above the pile, at once concealed the body, and spared the spectators that most terrible and dreaded ordeal of beholding it half consumed.

Before it was over, Aemilia came to herself, and, in spite of Tryphosa's entreaties, rose to her feet, though scarcely able to stand, and approaching the pile, threw into the fire some ornaments of her own which Tertia had liked.

One more dreadful duty remained. When the pile had burned down, and the smouldering embers had been quenched with wine, Piso, having taken off his shoes, gathered up Tertia's ashes, assisted by Cornelia, while Aemilia, half fainting as she was, held the urn to receive them—a silver urn, engraved with Tertia's name. The ashes were sprinkled with choice perfumes, and then the mourners entered the tomb, where a single lamp, hanging from the centre of the roof, showed the dome-like interior, with the rows of columbaria—some already filled, some waiting for future generations of Pisos.

Here Lucius Piso laid the urn containing his little daughter's ashes—placing beside it, in the niche just below, that which held the ashes of Pasht. The Praefica, who served the Temple of Venus Libitina, and might be considered a Priestess, sprinkled the

company with an olive branch dipped in pure water, and pronounced the word of dismissal.

Then Piso and the rest, lifting up their voices, bade farewell to the dead, with "Vale, vale, vale!" All these voices—the deep tones of the men, the sweet quavering trebles of the women—all shaking and throbbing with tears, sounded to Calpurnia like life bidding farewell to death. And then her father's voice, firm and steady, said, "We all shall follow thee, in the order Nature shall permit."

"May the earth lie light upon thee, Tertia!" said Crassus. It was the usual and expected phrase; but, coming from his lips, it grated intolerably on Calpurnia's ears.

The litters had been brought, that the ladies might ride home, and Calpurnia bade Tryphosa come with her. "Oh, how I wish that our cousin Publius had not come!" she said, when they were on their way. "And, oh, Tryphosa, when I think that every one of us shall one day lie in a little urn, I feel as though I could never laugh again!"

Outside Piso's house the crowd was still waiting to see the purification. The everriator and his ministers stood on the threshold, branches of olive and laurel in their hands, ready to sprinkle the mourners, and the fire was kindled before the door. Aulus, who,

in order to avoid participating in this worship of the Infernal Gods, did not go into the house, watched the scene from the vestibule. The light of the fire fell fitfully on the figures of the ministrants, as they assisted the mourners to step over the flames —sprinkling them all the while with pure water, while other attendants waved the censers, until the air was dense with smoke and heavy with perfume.

When all had entered the house, and were assembled in the atrium, Piso, standing by the altar of the Penates, thanked the clients for their presence, begged them to follow his major-domo, who would conduct them to the triclinium, where supper was laid, and invited them all to the feast to be held at the tomb upon the ninth day—the everriator all the while sweeping the house with a besom, and his assistants continuing to sprinkle every one with the lustral water.

Piso then excused himself and his family, and the guests trooped after the major-domo, their faces composed to a decent sadness—which did not, however, prevent Domitius from whispering to Laevinus that this was the first chance they had ever had of seeing the inside of friend Piso's dining-room.

"They say," continued Domitius, "that his other daughter—that pretty girl, you know, with yellow hair, that we saw going in to Minerva that day—you

remember, when Virro's wife had a row with the litter-men? Well, they say she's going to marry young Aulus Atticus—very good Falernian, Laevinus, eh? He's been a long while doing it; but he's done it handsomely, I will say, at last! Yes; Aulus Atticus, that's his name. I heard it from one of Fulvia's slaves. Oh, he's nobody; but his father saved Piso's life in Britain, they say, so Piso promised to give him his daughter. He's quite a poor man—lives in that house Ascletario used to have—on the Esquiline—you know it. By-the-by, where *was* Aulus? I didn't see him in the atrium. Oh, was he there? Well, I could have sworn I saw him out in the vestibule! This will put off the marriage. Piso will have to invite us again, then, that's one comfort. Nearly two years and a half he's been in Rome, and I never tasted his Falernian till to-day. True, 'pon my honour! If I were you, I'd have some more. It's very good. Here—just fill my glass, Davus! Hercules! look at Santra—pocketing that woodcock! And Sextilianus is drunk—positively drunk at a funeral! Well, some people have no sense of shame! Nothing is so disgusting to me, Laevinus, as indecorum!"

It is unnecessary to say that all Piso's clients took care to keep themselves disengaged for the silicernium. It was spread in the funeral triclinium, close to the

tomb, and the guests sat down to it as soon as the usual ceremonies had been performed. The presence of Piso—who, however, sat with his family at a table a little apart—gave it the solemnity proper to a funeral feast, and the parasites reserved most of their comments for a more convenient season. Laevinus, however, observed to his friend Domitius that young Atticus was not present, and asked how he explained this, if Atticus was really the *speratus* of Calpurnia?

Domitius admitted that it *was* odd, but yet insisted that a hundred explanations were possible. "He may be ill—or have had a bad omen—or Piso may wish to keep the thing quiet, since there *has* been a whisper that Calpurnius Crassus asked her in marriage—by-the-by, Crassus is not here either—in attendance, most likely. What do I think of Crassus? Why, what everybody thinks—a plaguy clever fellow—regular fox; but never has been popular. Has a way with him, you see, as though he thought every one else an ass. Now, they *are* asses; but it's a mistake to let 'em know you know it. After all, my dear boy, asses can kick, and the biggest ass can kick the hardest."

Laevinus agreed with his friend that Crassus was a nasty kind of fellow—*superb* to the last degree—a regular Tarquin, if he got the chance. "And not over free with his money, by all accounts—all the Pisos

are rather close. It's their Sabine blood—all the Sabines are near—as for Vespasian, he would look at the two sides of a farthing. Crassus is in debt, too; but there never was any generosity about him. He's almost worse than —— in that respect."

Here the speaker made a motion with his thumb (hidden behind the wine-cup he was draining) to intimate that he referred to his host—adding, in a whisper, that any one else in his position would have given Games in honour of his daughter. And, indeed, as Piso sat there, pale, stern, and far-withdrawn into himself, there was nothing about him to conciliate the goodwill of a person like Domitius, whose energies were wholly concentrated upon the genteel profession of supper-hunting, and who classified mankind according to the greater or less ease with which a needy but deserving gentleman could extract an invitation from them.

CHAPTER X.

"HEAR ME, CYTHEREA!"

"My cornicularius tells me that you have the handsomest and most accomplished slave-girl in Rome," said Domitian to Crassus, when he presented himself at Albanum, the day after Tertia's funeral. "She sings, he declares, like the sirens, and yet, Publius, you have never invited me to supper that I might hear her!"

"I shall be most supremely honoured, Caesar, if you will condescend to sup beneath my humble roof," said Crassus; but his heart sank, and he was aware of that sudden inward horror and sense of coming ill which he had felt before. He returned home feeling that a crisis was impending. Reason with himself as he would, he could not throw off this impression. He had gone back to Tuscany to put an end to a correspondence with Apollonius, to whom he dared not write from Rome. Crassus knew that Apollonius did not trust him, and that the correspondence was really intended to keep him in the dark without

offending him. It seemed to Crassus that he was being shut out of every one's confidence. He was getting frightened. After all, the correspondence had been so cautiously conducted that it appeared to refer only to the Pythagorean Philosophy. But then, Apollonius was a suspected person.

Crassus was in a very bad humour, into which the jealousy of a lover and the fears of a conspirator entered in about equal proportions, and he sent for Chione as soon as he reached his house. He sent for her at first to the library; but fearing lest Hylas should play the eavesdropper, bid her go to the great triclinium, and wait for him there, where he presently joined her. She was standing in the window, gazing across at the Palatine, which rose transfigured in the afternoon sunshine. The sight of it inflamed Crassus with fury—for was it not the symbol of the great prize which might even in this very instant be slipping from his grasp for ever? He began to reproach and threaten Chione—at first with a storm of invective, whose violence surprised himself, then with more cutting sarcasm, as the unwonted warmth of his passion cooled.

As Chione stood there against the light, listening to those reproaches of her master and lover, the majesty of her beauty struck Crassus as though he had never observed it before. It was the peculiarity

of Chione's beauty to suddenly reveal itself in this manner.

Crassus had begun his philippic standing at a little distance from Chione, but where he too could look across to the heights of Palatinus. But after a while he ceased to look thither, and saw only Chione—the edges of her robe touched with light, the soft grey shadows losing themselves among the folds of her drapery and nestling in the warm gold of her hair. Crassus was unused to violent passions; he disliked and despised them, and rarely gave way to them as he had to-day, and his own fury soon exhausted him. In the most insulting words he could lay his tongue to, he demanded how she had dared to pick up this Praetorian?—a common soldier! a Sabine hog! Perhaps she fancied this was the way to get her freedom? Perhaps she thought he had not observed her sulky ill-humours this long while—her insolence, her defiance? Perhaps, because she had contrived to steal his ring, she fancied she could throw dust in his eyes just as she pleased? When he had said all this, and much more to the same purpose—intermixed with furious threats of punishment—he found his anger dying away in spite of himself, and could only revive it by reminding himself that this affair would be sure to end in Domitian's compelling him to resign Chione.

"Well! have you nothing to say?" he said at last, throwing himself on one of the couches, all uncushioned as it was.

"What have I done? Was it my fault that Caesar sent the cornicularius Clodianus to your house?" asked Chione, calmly.

"You have talked to him! You have tried to catch him! I suppose you thought that, by betraying me, you could get him to set you free and marry you?" sneered Crassus.

"How can I betray you?" said Chione.

Crassus quailed before her look. "How?" he said uneasily. "How do I know?" And then he added brutally, "You would not be the first slave who betrayed her master."

Chione seemed for a moment transported with passion at this deadly taunt. She made as if she would dash herself against the wall. Her face and neck were purple with the violence of her emotion.

"It is not becoming to you to be so angry, Chione," said Crassus. "You are snow—not fire. Come, do not be angry. You know I was but jesting."

"Gods of Olympus! what a jest!" cried Chione, her lips quivering. It was evident that she was only by a tremendous effort holding back her tears, and yet the expression of her face puzzled Crassus. It was so strange, so full of contending passions, that

he said, in a tone quite changed—a tone in which there was no longer any anger, but only an acute desire to have an answer—

"What are your thoughts, Chione? Tell me, I conjure you! Have I not been an indulgent master to you? Why do you hate me?"

Over Chione, too, a change had passed. She was no longer hard and defiant, but seemed to be uneasy with some mental struggle, as she replied—

"Do I hate you? I know not. You are so unlike these dull, plodding Romans, who had to learn poetry and philosophy from us Greeks, and even now they have learnt it, are like babes stumbling over their A B. You have some of our Greek subtilty—your wits move quicker. You perceive my thoughts, even when they lie in the depths of my heart. You should be a Greek! These dull Romans are only Latin husbandmen, disciplined into soldiers! What Plato or Anaxagoras was ever born of Rome? And yet you conquered us!" She bowed her stately head, as Cassandra might have bowed hers when she knew that Troy was taken. "Yes," Chione went on, "the Gods themselves are on your side—all you do, whether for good or ill, turns to your greatness. *You* warred upon all the cities of Italy, and only grew the stronger. *We*, alas! warring on each other, only prepared ourselves to become your prey! Pallas herself and

bright Apollo left us to our fate! What is there in these seven molehills of yours, that draws to them the Empire of the World? But *you*—you are not the child of Rome." She paused, and looked at him in silence for a moment. Then, turning impatiently from him, exclaimed, "What use is there in words?" and folded her arms across her bosom, with what would have been sullen obstinacy, if the dignity of Chione's gestures could have allowed them to appear sullen.

"You have been false to me!" said Crassus, trying to lash himself up again. "You have betrayed me! This fellow is your lover!"

"And what if he is?" said Chione, suddenly turning upon him with unutterable scorn. "What if he is? Is it a crime in me to have a lover, when you are about to marry a wife?"

"Ho! ho! there we are, are we?" said Crassus. "Now we come to the point indeed! *Hinc illae lachrymae!* And why, pray, should I not marry a wife?"

"For no reason in the world, that I know of," said Chione, with a haughty indifference worthy of Cornelia herself. "And why, pray, should I not be civil to Clodianus? You pay your slave too much honour, Sir!"

"Perdition take you!" muttered Crassus, between

his teeth. And he said aloud, in a peremptory tone, "What do you want?"

"What you will never give me—my freedom," said Chione.

"That you may marry Clodianus?" he said insultingly. "He is a very handsome man—much handsomer than I. I congratulate you on your taste!"

Chione's eyes blazed with fury, but she did not speak.

"You will be disappointed, however," Crassus went on. "You thought you could get Caesar to ask me for you for Clodianus, but it will turn out otherwise than you reckoned. I am not going to marry, and I do not mean to part with you."

"Oh, I hate you! I hate you!" cried Chione, bursting into tears, and tearing her hair—with the action, it fell all round her in a golden shower.

"How beautiful you are! How cruel of you not to love me!" said Crassus, in a tone between jest and earnest. It fairly maddened Chione.

"Love you?" she cried, in a transport of fury. "Who am I, that I should love you? I am your slave. With what monstrous injustice do you treat me! I am a slave, bought and sold like a statue, or a horse, and yet you demand that I shall have the heart of a woman! You dare to demand fidelity, as you call it, because you gave another man a certain

number of sesterces for me! You call me false, forsooth—as though *I* had benefited by the purchase-money you gave for me! You require that I should love you!" Here Chione's voice rang out in magnificent scorn. "Love you! Can a *thing* love? But if it can, on what compulsion, I pray you, must it love the man who happened to buy it? Did he buy it for any other reason than his own pleasure? You might as well demand of your silver sideboard that *it* should love you for adorning your house with it! You bought my body, indeed, and with my body you can compel me to serve you, like all your other slaves—like your horses, and your mules, and your oxen. You bought my hair, my limbs, my playing on the lute, my singing. You have them; they are yours. But my affection——" She suddenly dropped her tragic tone, and spoke with the most withering sarcasm. "It is strange to hear Calpurnius Crassus, who despises all men, who sneers at virtue as only a subtler kind of vice—it is strange to hear him reproaching his slave-girl for not *loving* him! Oh, Immortal Gods, heard ye ever reproach so unjust?" She broke into wild, hysterical laughter—so fiercely bitter, so unlike laughter, that Crassus quailed.

"Do not, do not! I cannot bear it," he said, covering his ears with his hands, to shut out the dreadful sound of that laughter. But Chione laughed on,

though torrents of tears flowed from her eyes, till from sheer exhaustion she ceased, panting; yet never removed her eyes—whose fires tears could not quench—from Crassus's face.

"Chione——" he began, in a tone of remonstrance singularly unlike his usual cynical indifference. But at the first word she went off again into another paroxysm of laughter, less wild and uncontrollable, but with an even deeper passion. Indeed, her passion completely overbore Crassus; it swept him away with it, and filled him with consternation and panic, such as he would have felt in beholding some amazing catastrophe of nature.

She had sunk upon a couch, but he dared not approach her. He could not even rise—his knees trembled so violently, and his will was so cowed by the extremity of her passion. At last, she grew more calm, and gathering the folds of her robe about her, she rose like a Goddess, and turning to the statue of Venus, she touched its knees. Then, lifting up her hands, as one who invoked the Celestial Gods—

"Hear me, Cytherea! Goddess of my native Isle!" she cried; "Thou who punishest the blasphemers of love! Hear me, and judge between me and this man, who once with a ring pledged himself to Thee as Thy votary! By that ring, I invoke Thee!"

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As the heavy curtains of the doorway fell together again behind Chione, it seemed to Crassus that a deadly coldness diffused itself through the great banqueting-hall, and an aching emptiness. He was afraid to be alone there—with Venus, whom Chione had invoked. And yet Venus had not answered; she appeared, indeed, to have lost something. It was as though Chione had taken away with her all that Venus had ever had of divine. But for all that Crassus could not endure the unseeing gaze of her stony eyes. He recalled with superstitious horror the words of blasphemous presumption which he had once uttered. He felt a chilly breath behind him, which seemed to gently impel him from the place, and when he gained the library, he was panting and breathless, as though he had yielded to his terrors and fled for his life. Yet he had mastered himself, and walked thither deliberately.

CHAPTER XI.

"IT IS—DEATH!"

When Chione—wild with the rage of her interview with Crassus, the words of her curse yet ringing in her ears, as though not she, but Venus herself had uttered them—when Chione went out, all trembling and quivering with the passion which had possessed her, she felt the walls of the house suffocate her. She would have liked to run—anywhere, no matter where. She passed Hylas, who had been sneaking along the corridors, trying to overhear. He sidled up to her with a look of malicious curiosity on his face; but before he could ask the impertinent question which he had ready for her, Chione, transported with a sudden fury, lifted up her goddess-like arm, and dealt him so sound a box on the ear that he staggered against the wall, and began to bellow.

"Oh! oh! oh! you have killed me!" he blubbered, his pretty face scarlet with pain and anger.

"Cry-baby!" said Chione, brushing past him.

He flew at her, but she caught him by the wrists. She was taller than he, and his muscles were lax and effeminate—she shook him like a rat.

"Viper!" she hissed, "I have a good mind to kill you in earnest! If ever you dare insult me again, I will tell your master about the lizard you put in my ointment! Poisoner! serpent! I know you! Beware!"

Hylas's jaw dropped in surprise and dismay. He had always been a little afraid that Chione knew about the lizard. But a happy retort occurred to him.

"It's well for a thief to call other people poisoners!" he said spitefully. He was dreadfully afraid of Chione; but he had just heard footsteps. "I know all about that ring!" he said. Then, as Chione shook him, he cried, "Help! murder!"

"Ever dare say that again," panted Chione, "and I will kill you." She set her teeth, and shook Hylas till he ached.

"By Hercules! what is the matter?" said one of the tricliniarii, running up. "That's right, Chione, shake him again—he's sure to deserve it!"

"You're jealous of me, flat nose!" said Hylas, in whom spite and resentment got the better of bodily fear, now that he was no longer alone with Chione. He reflected that they would not dare to really hurt him.

"I am sorry I touched him—he is not worth it,"

said Chione, and she left Hylas to smooth his ruffled feathers.

He slipped down on the floor, and groaned and whimpered, "Oh! oh! I feel as though I had been put on the horse!"

"Serve you right," muttered the tricliniarius. "A monkey like you needs to be taught his place."

Chione hurried to her own room. It was fitted up with unusual luxury, and the sight of the embroidered hangings and ornaments enraged her afresh. She tore down the hangings. She took up the beautiful mirror of polished steel, and hurled it to the ground, and flung the ornaments—coral beads, pearls, silver bracelets, and all—in a heap. Then, as though the paroxysm of her rage had past, she washed her face, put on a dark dress, wrapped her head in a black mantle, and was going out, but paused to think.

She intended to go to the Great Circus—she would have her fortune told as soon as it grew dark. Wild ideas of throwing herself into the Tiber presented themselves to her mind. She would float down the stream—perhaps her body would drift into a reed-bed. A barge coming up from Ostia would pass. The bargees would see her—they would pull her out. She saw her dead limbs used roughly, exposed to the coarse eyes and jests of the bargees—and shuddered. No; poison was better than that! She carefully shut

her door, and, going to a corner, lifted up one of the tiles of the floor. A thin gold chain hung round her neck—it supported a small bag containing a talisman. Chione pulled it up from where it lay between her breasts, and slipped into it something which she took from the hollow below the floor.

It was growing dusk when Chione reached the Great Circus. The vast circumference of its walls looked low under the emptiness and the fast-fading saffron light of the sky. Already the long western side of the Circus was plunged in black shadow. All along the *spina*, booths had been set up, and here wandering fortune-tellers plied their trade when there was no Show in preparation. When there was, they struck their tents, and went across the City, to the Rampart of Tarquin, beyond the Esquiline, where the neighbourhood of the Praetorian Camp brought them plenty of custom.

The sand of the arena was driven into heaps by the wind. These grey reaches of sand, losing themselves in the shadow of the towering wall, might have been sand-heaps drifted to the foot of a beetling crag. The entrances under the podium might have been caves, and the noise of the City—growing less every moment, as it was too late for workers, and still too early for roysterers—might have been the sound of ever slower-coming waves at ebb-tide.

Chione fancied she smelt the sea, and her heart cried out for the sunny Isles of the blue Aegaean, the little creeks and inlets where she used to play, in the days which she loved to dream that she remembered. A breath of the tramontana raised the sand in an eddy at her feet, and stealing in between the folds of her cloak, made her shiver.

The lights in the booths and the dark figures which came and went had a weird effect, and so had the gleams of light here and there under the arches. The Circus was a thoroughfare, and a few persons were passing through its huge plain, with the plodding step of those who are going somewhere. Chione tried to imitate them. She checked her pace, muffled herself more closely, but felt her resolution waver, as the tramontana, caught as in a gully, whistled more keenly. But she had not crossed more than a third of the arena before she heard a soft voice murmuring close behind her—

"Let me tell your fortune, my handsome lady! I am a Thessalian, and the Thessalians know the mightiest spells. You have come out to have your fortune told—you have no business down the Tuscan Street at this time of night, so do not try to deceive me! Come with me to yonder light, and let me see your hand."

Chione saw a dark young woman, with a face which

was not Greek, but which was keen and nervous. She appeared very eager to tell Chione's fortune.

"You are not a Greek," said Chione. "But I have seen you before."

"It must have been in the streets, then," replied the Thessalian—but she looked more closely at Chione. "Come," she said, "I will tell you your fortune for less than old Euterpe"—this was the oldest and most famous of the fortune-tellers who frequented the Circus. "We will burn vervain, and you shall wish, and rub yourself with the ashes."

She led Chione to the other side of the Circus, where there was a small tripod. Fire was smouldering on it, and a lamp stood on the ground near it.

"I know far more than this," said the fortune-teller. "But it is long since I did the great things. My grandmother cannot bear it, and tries to prevent me. She is frightened, because all I say always comes true."

A wildness in the young woman's eyes, and still more in her voice and manner, scared Chione a little. The Thessalian, as she stood now, with her mantle cast off, in her strange half-eastern dress, and serpent-headed belt, her dishevelled hair escaping from the fillet which encircled her head, looked like the half-maniacal Priestess of some Goddess of the Under World. She had dropped a few grains of an

aromatic substance into the fire, and the flames had instantly leaped up, and were burning fiercely.

"Let me see your hand," said the Thessalian, seizing it. Her own was damp and hot. "There are two men that love you," she said. "He that loves you least loves you most truly, and he that loves you most is most false to you. Let me see your face."

She suddenly pulled down the mantle in which Chione had wrapped her head, and, holding her so that the light from the still-flaming tripod fell full upon her, looked long. While she thus held Chione, a night-bird flying past almost dashed in their faces. Chione uttered a slight scream.

The Thessalian let her go, and sighed deeply, like one who has held his breath for a long while.

"What do you read?" asked Chione at last.

But the Thessalian put her hands before her eyes. "No, no!" she said; "I will not tell you. Here, let us burn the vervain, and you shall wish."

"Nay," said Chione; "first tell me what shall happen to me. I am resolved to know it."

"Ask me not! I have compassion on you!" said the Thessalian, wildly. "They are right who say we should not inquire touching the future—what boots it to see evil fortune afar?"

"Then it is afar?" asked Chione. Her heart was beating so fast that it seemed to be hammering the

breath out of her. What was this fate too terrible to be revealed? Had Crassus resolved to crucify her? She was sick with deadly terror. "What is it?" she gasped. "I *will* know."

"It is—death!" said the Thessalian, as though the word were wrung from her by force.

Chione staggered back, and nearly fell. "Ah!" she said, in a sound between a sigh and a groan. Then, recovering a little, she asked, "Is it by violence?"

"I know not," said the Thessalian. "Since you will know, know that the thread of your life is suddenly cut. Are you so sorry you will never be old? To grow old, and cease to be loved—to see younger and more beautiful women loved in your place—is this so sweet, that you should desire it?"

She was passing a sprig of vervain through the flames. Again and again she did it, muttering unintelligible words. "Now, rub your breast and forehead with it," she said, "and wish."

Chione took the sprig, and seemed to pause irresolute.

"Wish! wish!" cried the fortune-teller. "Quick, before the flame dies down! and then put the sprig in your bosom. You will have your wish," she said, when, just as Chione put the vervain into her breast, the flame leapt up higher than ever, and then died.

CHAPTER XII.

TWENTY-FOUR PER CENT.

The honour which Domitian had done Crassus in inviting himself to dinner was attended by some very prosaic difficulties, as well as by the more sentimental danger of the Emperor's perhaps taking a fancy to Chione. The outlay which would be necessary was just then a serious affair for Crassus, who was already in debt to half the Jew and Greek money-lenders of the City. He was obliged to go to Isaac of Thessalonica to raise the ready money he wanted, and he availed himself of this opportunity of borrowing without exciting suspicion, to ask Isaac for a loan of a million sesterces at twenty-four per cent. Isaac held out for two hours for forty-eight, protesting that the security was so bad that a less rate was preposterous.

Crassus was still haggling with the usurer, in the dark little back-room of his shop in the New Forum, pervaded by a strong smell of oil and fried meats, when a slave-boy came in to say that an old woman

and a young woman were waiting to speak with Isaac. "They are those from Thessalonica," added the boy.

"How dare you, spawn of Beelzebub, interrupt me when I am taking the commands of this illustrious nobleman?" said Isaac, in a fury, shaking his head at the boy till his high-peaked cap trembled.

"I told them you were engaged with the noble Calpurnius Crassus," said the boy, but little abashed by all this show of anger. "And the young one besought me to tell him that she would speak with him—there is something, she says, that she would tell him."

"Let her go to my house this evening, then," said Crassus, who thought this information might refer to Piso. "And now, Isaac, shall I have the money of you, or of Demetrius?"

"Demetrius!" cried Isaac, in a voice hysterical with scorn and hatred. "Demetrius! a Greek thief! The greatest liar in Rome—that I knew when he was the greatest liar in Thessalonica! Would you go to *him*, and have him lend you the money at forty-eight per cent., in dirty bills, half of which would be returned to you torn across? Whereas *I* will find the money—that is, I will try to do so; but it is a great sum, a huge sum, a stupendous sum, for me to find at a day's notice! Nevertheless, I will try—I will

try. But Demetrius! Holy Patriarchs and Prophets! May my tongue rot, may my heart dry up, may a murrain come upon me, if Demetrius is not the greatest rogue and liar to be found in Rome—and do you talk of going to *him?*"

"I shall go if you ask more than twenty-four," said Crassus, coolly. "Moreover, I have some little credit with Caesar, and I shall advise him, next time he consults me on the subject, to send all the Jews packing again. You are only here on sufferance, remember, and if you do not make yourselves useful, it will be the worse for you."

"Alas!" cried Isaac, in his own tongue. "How do the Gentiles oppress us! Surely, they have trodden the Sanctuary underfoot, and the Holy Places have they defiled—— "

"Don't stand muttering curses in your barbarous lingo," said Crassus, who could descend to a coarse brutality of speech upon occasion. "It is vain to call upon Anchialus—he did not help you when your City was besieged—he is on our side, so you had best be civil to us too!"

"Now, by the Holy Name which it is not lawful to utter, I wonder the earth does not open and swallow him!" said Isaac, under his breath. He was evidently somewhat frightened at these threats, however; he began rummaging in the pockets of his gaberdine,

and when he had found his tablets, he said, as he opened them, and took the stylus to write, "You require a million sesterces, at twenty-four per cent., by to-morrow at noon, on the security of your house upon the Esquiline—upon which there is a mortgage already——"

"You old thief, my house is worth a million sesterces, and a million more to that, and a million more to that!" said Crassus, angrily. "My pictures and statues alone——"

"Your Venus, as I have told you before, is not a genuine antique," said Isaac; "but, if you will sell it, I will give you seventy thousand sesterces for it."

"I dare say you will—a work of Scopas!" said Crassus, with a sneer.

"A Scopas! Holy Patriarchs! It is not even a Polycharmus!" cried Isaac. "But it is a pretty thing—and I will go as high as seventy-five thousand——"

"I would not part with her for two hundred thousand," said Crassus "It is enough that I offer you the security of my house. And, by Hercules! you shall insert a clause to the effect that in case you put in an execution, the Venus is expressly exempted from seizure."

"Father Abraham! Oh, that I had said a hundred

and fifty thousand!" thought Isaac. But aloud he asked, "At forty-eight per cent. then?"

"Forty-eight! By the Infernal Gods, you son of an Egyptian leper!" cried Crassus, furiously. "Lend me the money at twenty-four, or I go to Demetrius this instant, and use all my influence with Caesar to get you and all your greasy fellow-worshippers of an ass's head driven neck and crop out of Italy!"

"What must be, must be!" sighed Isaac. "Rather than you should go to Demetrius, I will try to find the money—at twenty-four per cent."—here Isaac groaned —"to be paid on the Kalends of each month, in silver denarii——"

"That's impossible—you must take bills," said Crassus. "Do you expect me to send a troop of mules to your door, every thirty days, laden with bullion?"

"Holy Father Jacob!" said Isaac, wringing his hands; "and suppose your bills are dishonoured?"

"To Demetrius, then!" said Crassus, throwing the lappet of his toga over his shoulder, and making as if to go.

"Have your way—ruin me!" cried Isaac, in well-feigned despair. "I, myself, have bills to meet on the Kalends—but, no matter. A million sesterces, at twenty-four per cent., on the security of your house on the Esquiline—'Ad Laureas,' that is the name

of the house, I think? A million sesterces"—he mumbled this, as he plied his stylus on the waxed surface of his tablets—"at twenty-four—by to-morrow, at the sixth hour. And yet they say that the Jews drive hard bargains with their debtors!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A DOG-THROW.

Domitian had not only invited himself to supper—he had chosen the guests. These were to be Piso, Antonius Primus, Nerva, and Stella. He was displeased when Domitia, in whose presence the invitation was given, declared her intention to be of the party; but she still had a singular power over him, and when she said, "I also will sup with you, Publius, that I may see the paintings of your triclinium," and added—looking boldly at the Emperor—"I hear, too, that you have a very beautiful Greek slave-girl," the settled redness of Domitian's face only slightly deepened, and he made no objection.

Crassus had not considered it politic to be too magnificent; but everything at the banquet was in the most perfect taste. The most beautiful boys relieved the guests of their slippers, and Domitian vomited in a golden basin. He reclined in the centre of the couch, with Crassus above, and Domitia below

him. Domitia had come dressed in a robe of purple silk, with stripes of gold—the silk so fine as to be nearly transparent. She had on a necklace of those beryls known to jewellers as aquamarines, because they are of the colour of the sea, and her fingers were covered with rings, among which shone conspicuous a marvellous opal, in which there gleamed a thousand changing hues of sea and sky and fire. The stone was very large, and rivalled that famous stone—if, indeed, it was not the very same—to obtain which Mark Antony proscribed the Senator Nonius. She looked like a glistening jewel herself, and was a strange contrast to Nerva's gaunt yet venerable form, clad in the broad-striped tunic of a Senator, with a loose supper dress over it, of very fine purple cloth—not silk, like the robes of all the other guests, except Piso. A strong escort of Praetorians kept the doors of the house, and a smaller detachment, under the orders of Clodianus, was drawn up on either side of the entrance to the triclinium itself. At an early stage of the banquet, and before Chione and the singing-women had appeared, Domitian called in Clodianus, and made him stand behind him.

When at last Chione, proud and stately as the outraged Vashti, entered at the head of the singing-women, Domitian let himself slide back on his cushions, and lay observing her from under the pent-

house of his red eyebrows. Chione, confused by the presence of Clodianus, and aware of Domitia's bold and threatening gaze fastened upon her, was some time before she noticed that the Emperor was watching her too, with a steadfastness which could bode no good. She faltered in her song, the strings of her lyre jangled, and she shot one half-threatening, half-beseeching glance at Clodianus, immovable as a statue behind the couch.

Domitia's jealousy was somewhat appeased on first seeing Chione, whose beauty was of that loftiest kind which only sculpture can fully reveal. Domitia did not at first see much to admire in this large-limbed, tawny-haired woman, who, if she was a Venus at all, had the Juno-like majesty of the Melian Venus, rather than the resistless loveliness of her of Gnidos. On the whole, Domitia neither admired Chione herself, nor feared lest she should find any great favour in Domitian's eyes.

With Clodianus the case, however, was very different, as Domitia perceived after one glance at him. He stood with one hand resting on the edge of his shield, the other on his long two-edged sword. His crested helmet increased his already tall stature, and to-day he wore his lorica, the golden scales of which flashed with the slow heave of his mighty chest. Except for his breathing and his eyes, he might have been a

bronze statue. But Domitia saw with jealous anger —for she felt for this splendid young soldier all the admiration of Hippia for her gladiator—that Clodianus's eyes were riveted on Chione with a burning intensity of gaze which caused even the dauntless empress a sensation something like fear. He appeared to see nothing else, to know nothing of what was going on. When Chione sang, Domitia fancied that fires streamed from his eyes, but possibly the fumes of the wines had confused her vision, despite the garlands of Campanian roses and spikenard leaves with which Crassus had presented his guests.

Crassus himself, though torn with a hundred fears, had never so triumphantly vindicated his claim to be called an accomplished man of the world. He was not sure whether Domitian had come to spy upon himself, or upon Piso, or to see Chione, or for all these reasons. He was only certain that he had *some* motive other than the wish to be entertained sumptuously. But no hint of anxiety appeared in his bearing. Stella kept up a gay conversation with Antonius, in which Crassus took part, seeming to have no care but that of attending to his guests. But, however much Domitia allowed her hopes to father her thoughts, Crassus saw at a very early period of the evening that he must make up his mind to resign Chione. He knew that Domitian had heard of her

from Clodianus, and he looked at Clodianus with such a raging hatred in his heart that he was afraid it would be seen by others, and turned away his eyes to watch Chione.

"The jade cannot but prefer me to that ulcerous mountain of deformity," he thought, looking at the blotched and inflamed countenance of Domitian, with its large dim eyes, now half shut, its shaggy brows, its scanty hair—all more hideous by contrast with the crown of fresh sweet roses which he wore. As he lay back on the couch, too, he made more conspicuous the unsightly corpulence which had spoiled what was in youth a not ill-proportioned figure. But Crassus's eyes were sharpened by jealousy and fear. How could he be sure that in some unguarded moment Chione had not surprised or guessed some of his secrets? And so he alternately watched Domitia watching Clodianus, and Domitian watching Chione. Nor did the singular expression of intentness in Clodianus's eyes escape him; but by that fatality which so often befalls the most sagacious, he now began to misinterpret it. The simple and obvious explanation—that Clodianus was himself enthralled by Chione's beauty—seemed too simple and obvious. Crassus saw deeper now. Clodianus, he thought, having attracted the notice of Domitia, had plotted by means of a fresh face to divert Caesar's atten-

tion from his wife's intrigue, and was now anxiously watching to see whether his plot was succeeding. "Curse him! could he not have chosen some other girl?" said Crassus to himself. The long strain on his nerves to which a conspirator is exposed was telling upon him, and he no longer felt quite sure of himself. He could not blame himself for this unexpected mischance. He had never boasted of possessing a beautiful and accomplished slave—he had been too cunning for that. Chance—and chance only—had been his enemy. It was maddening to lose Chione, and dreadful to think that some—perhaps not ill-intended—word of hers might one day set Domitian thinking—and suspecting. It was useless to hope to make Domitian forget anything he had once got into his head; he was as bad as Tiberius himself for brooding over things. Crassus would have plied him with wine, but Domitian rarely drank much at night—he was too much afraid of the violent death foretold him by the Chaldaeans in his youth ever to go drunk to bed. Domitian several times called Chione to him, made her drink from his cup, put a sweetmeat in her mouth, and threw a rich shawl over her shoulders. He spoke little—when he did, he quoted a line from the Greek poets, harped on the bad corn-harvest, and dropped a few ominous words about astrologers, whom he called abettors of treason. Then he talked of

Statius, and of his verses on the Dedication of the Domitian Way, asking Piso minutely about the road, as though he had but just come from Baiae. And then, as soon as the dessert was brought, he said to Crassus—

"Publius, I will throw you for the girl for fifty thousand sesterces."

This was far less than the price that a girl of Chione's beauty and accomplishments would fetch on the Sacred Way, especially as the auctioneer could add, "formerly belonged to our Modern Petronius, the illustrious Publius Crassus;" but it was impossible to haggle with Caesar. Crassus, rallying all his self-command by the instinct of self-preservation, which was the strongest thing in him, snapped his fingers, and bade Hylas bring him the dice. Hylas, who had heard the challenge, could scarcely dissemble his joy. There was, of course, a chance that Caesar might lose the throw—Fortune is capricious—but either by gift, or purchase, or play, Chione must needs become his before the day was out. For an instant, Crassus had thought of flinging himself at Domitian's feet, and entreating him not to deprive him of Chione. But the ridicule to which this would expose him—very likely in vain—was more than Crassus could face. So, with rage in his heart, he waited till the dice were brought.

Meanwhile Chione and Clodianus, who had heard the wager, exchanged one swift glance. Chione was as pale as death, and there was terror in her eyes. In a moment of madness, Chione had been half ready to yield to the fierce impetuosity of this young soldier. He was not unfathomable, like Crassus. Chione could see to the bottom of his heart, through all the turbid waters of his passions. She understood him; he was a splendid animal—strong, brave, to be feared much, but to be looked at twice by every woman who saw him. Domitia herself had fallen in love with him. Clodianus never sneered—hardly knew what a sneer was; Crassus sneered at every one, and liked to see people wince. And Chione knew that Clodianus was fiercely in love with her, that he was the Emperor's favourite, and might come to great advancement. He might be Praefect of the Praetorians. He might—who could say?—rise higher still, for the Praetorians decide who shall be Emperor. Some said Otho's mother was not even free-born. Vitellius was descended from a freedman and a common woman of the town. Vespasian's ancestors were only Sabine farmers. Clodianus might rise as others had risen. And how handsome he was! how valorous! how determined! He would stick at nothing. And then, with a swift and sudden revulsion of feeling, Chione saw Clodianus as he was—a barbarian, a mere

gladiator, the symbol of brute force, dull, heavy, furious in anger, and furious in love—a human beast, an ox of Reate. She had thought she hated Crassus, and yet as she stood there, while the singing-girls broke into a tripping melody, the banqueting-hall grew dark to her eyes with fear—fear that Crassus would lose the throw. The whole horror of the situation burst upon her as she saw Caesar's dim eyes—like a dead man's—fixed upon herself, and Domitia watching Clodianus over the Emperor's shoulder, and Clodianus—who had never looked so strong. Chione's heart quailed. She saw herself a leaf swirled down the stream. Giddy and sick, she leaned against the wall; her trembling knees could scarcely support her. She turned her despairing eyes on Crassus. Surely his countenance had changed, too; to Chione, he seemed grown in a moment haggard and ghastly. The world crumbled round her—she saw the columns of the hall rock, she felt the floor heave—the figures of Domitian and Domitia and Clodianus shook, and grew indistinct, like shivered reflections in a mirror. The world was ending just in time to save her.

So thinking, she slipped into darkness. But the earthquake was only in her own soul—it was she herself who tottered and rocked, and fell over on the shoulder of one of the singing-girls.

Crassus heard the commotion, as though it were

something happening a long way off. So furious a tempest was roaring within him that it drowned all other sounds. Rage at the tyrant, at Clodianus, at the whole world, rent his soul. He was afraid he should go mad. He heard a voice chanting in his ear what seemed to be a line of heroic verse, but he had never heard it before—

"Plunged in the fiery flood of Phlegethon."

Over and over again he heard the words. He knew that Chione had fainted; but he could not turn his eyeballs towards her. He could only look at the bloated face of Domitian, with the ulcerous blotches inflamed by feasting. Should he then and there plunge a knife into his heart? Would there be time? But he saw Clodianus's eyes fixed sternly on him, and he, too, felt himself a helpless atom, caught in the wheels of Fate and whirled round and round; and with a gasp which roused him as from a nightmare, he sank back on the cushions.

Piso had taken little notice of the wager. To him Crassus was the courtier, the panderer to Domitian's vices, the imitator of Caius Petronius, and he never so much as thought of suspecting him of any genuine feeling for his slave. Even when Chione fell fainting among the singing-girls, Piso, with a passing sense of compassion, supposed only that she recoiled from Domitian. That a slave-girl could feel anything but

detestation for his cold-blooded and cynical kinsman never so much as crossed his mind, and the boasts which Crassus had occasionally allowed himself to utter, when warm with wine, had put the crown on Piso's contempt for him. Domitian, however, marked it all, and set it down against Crassus in the long list he already had of suspicious circumstances.

The seven dice—the three *tesserae* and the four *tali* —were brought in the ivory "turret," and Domitian, saying, "Three throws each," rattled the dice and threw. "Four, five, six—two aces, three, and four," he said, counting. "That makes twenty-four points." Crassus, with an unsteady hand, threw twenty-three. In the second throw, Domitian made thirty-one, throwing five, six, six, with the tesserae, and one, three, four, six, with the tali—this being the best throw of the tali, as they all came out different numbers. "One more, and it was a Venus!" cried Domitian. Crassus, growing still more unnerved, threw so awkwardly, that one of the tali fell on its end, which bearing no number, the throw had to be repeated. He rattled the box for several moments. Yet what did it matter? He who played with Caesar, whether he won or lost, must always lose!

When at last Crassus threw, the dice came out all sixes. This was, so far as points went, the highest number possible—forty-two. It was also the best

throw of the tesserae, but, inasmuch as the numbers were the same, was the worst of the tali.

"The third is the lucky time!" cried Domitian, and seizing the turret, he threw, saying as he did so, "What is she called? Chione! A Venus!" he shouted, as the tesserae showed three sixes, while the tali fell in their four numbers. "You cannot beat that, Publius!"

With a trembling hand, Crassus threw, but so completely had Fortune deserted him that he made the very worst throw of all—a dog-throw, in which the tesserae all came out aces, and the tali all sixes.

"I knew I should be lucky," said Domitian. "I dreamt last night of Praenestine Fortune."

CHAPTER XIV.

PHANTOMS OF THE NIGHT.

It was scarcely sunset when Domitian broke up the banquet, which, as usual, he did suddenly, and as if in haste. Chione, who had not yet come to herself, was put into a litter, the other guests took their departure, and Crassus was left alone. He told Hylas that his head ached, forbade any one to disturb him, and went into his library. There, flinging himself on a couch, face downward, and burying his nails deep in the cushions, he lay for hours without moving —as Hylas ascertained by stealing from time to time to the door. At last, elated with triumph, and goaded by curiosity and a jealous desire to look on his master, Hylas ventured to bring a lamp. He came up to the couch, and touched him on the shoulder, asking if he were ill?

"Villain!" cried Crassus, suddenly starting up, with bloodshot eyes and a face contorted with fury, "this is your doing! Your devilish arts have brought this about! Dare not to deny it. You hated her—

you tried to poison her. I know all. Begone! spawn of Tartarus! Out of my sight, before I do you a mischief!" He seized the lamp, and hurled it at Hylas's head, missing him by a hair's breadth. The lamp fell clanging on the marble floor, and Hylas fled with a howl of terror, while Crassus threw himself down once more, grinding his teeth, and clenching his hands till he drove the nails into his palms, and beating his brains for schemes no longer of mere ambition, but of vengeance. Never had anything so deeply moved him. He was astonished at himself. "I am akin to the vulgar herd, after all," he thought, with a feeble return of cynicism. "But she is unlike all others. Many have feared me—many hated me. Cornelia and Lucius despise me; but she defied me, yet could not quite hate me. Our souls—if we have them—and she would make me believe it—met as equal combatants. What magnificent wrath flashed out of her eyes the other day! A woman? She is like a Goddess who has stooped to love a mortal, and scorches him with her celestial fires!"

Crassus had drunk deep—in spite of resolutions not to drink—but he appeared to himself to be perfectly sober. He was, at any rate, sufficiently so to marvel at his own mood, and to know that such emotions were new and strange to him. He had read of them in the poets, and, as he read, had sneered at man's power of

creating illusions. He had prided himself on reducing all pleasure to a physical source; he had derided the Stoics for exalting the mind above the body. And here he was, drivelling like the worst of them. But this and all his other misfortunes dated from the loss of his ring. Since then, all had gone ill with him, and even his nerves seemed to have given way.

He fell at last into an uneasy sleep, from which he awoke with all his limbs aching from the uncomfortable position in which he had lain. He was still, however, so heavy with sleep that it was some time before he could rouse himself to move. Then, by very slow degrees, a low sound broke upon his ear. It was outside the door, and as it grew louder, or his senses more wakeful, he knew that it was the voice of Chione, and that she was singing the song she had sung at the banquet he gave to Piso, the very night when he lost his ring—

"Soon the night shall end the day,
Soon the summer pass away,
Soon the man grow old and grey;
Fires of love soon cease to burn,
Hearts lie cold within their urn;
Yesterday will ne'er return.
And of all that knows decay,
Love's the shortest-lived, I say.
Short and sweet is love, alas!
Like a shadow on the grass,
Like a face seen in a glass.
Now is summer passed away,
Now the night doth end the day."

The singing was very low—so low, that he seemed to hear it rather with the mental than the bodily ear. Yet he *did* hear it—he was sure of that—and it was the sweetest, most ear-soothing sound he had ever heard. It was strange that as soon as he knew it for Chione's singing a torpor took possession of him, and he did not even desire to get up and let her in. Nor did he feel glad; on the contrary, it appeared to him very awful that Chione should have escaped and returned. And yet it was not the wrath of Domitian that he feared, but rather a strange terror of Chione herself. And yet her voice soothed him, so that, as he listened, he lost all sense of fatigue, and the aching in his limbs ceased, and so perfect was his repose that he fell into a profound slumber.

He awoke suddenly—this time, broad awake. He must have sprung up in the very instant of waking, for he found himself sitting on the edge of the bed. There was a lamp somewhere, which shed an imperfect light over the room, yet enough for Crassus to see the pool of oil spilled from the one he had thrown at Hylas. But in the same moment that his eye fell on the spilled oil, he saw something else which froze his blood with terror. Chione—but Chione changed and strange—stood looking down upon him. Her feet melted away into the shadows; her hair was dishevelled, her eyes were hollow, her dress was dis-

ordered. There was something like a bruise on her cheek, and another on her shoulder, but what terrified Crassus most was her appalling whiteness—a whiteness as white as that of snow, or marble, yet unlike any of these whitenesses—a shadowy whiteness which it seemed as though the hues of life could never warm again.

And all the while he knew that it was not Chione who stood there, but only her phantasm. The real Chione was behind him—he felt her hands upon his shoulders, her breath upon his cheek. But he could not move, because with unwinking eyes the phantasm gazed upon him, and he gazed back again. It was because her eyes never blinked and her breast never heaved that she was so terrible. And then a voice—faint as the echoes which die away down forest glades when the hunter has winded his horn—went sighing through the room, in long-drawn sighs, which were words, and Crassus understood them all, though afterwards he could recall no single one. After he knew not how long of this frightful nightmare, he felt the hands relax their hold, and Chione, or her phantasm, drew nearer. Then his terror vanished; he knew that he had had a nightmare, but was now at last thoroughly awake; he stretched out his arms to her, and would have spoken, but though his lips unclosed, no sound came forth. "How pale

you are!" he would have said. "How did you escape?"

And as though the phantom of Chione read these questions in his eyes, it smiled. But at that smile it seemed to Crassus that a knife cut through his heart. He clapped his hand there, as at a physical pain. So sharp was the pang, that he did not see for a moment that Chione was holding out something to him. It was the lost ring, and she laid it in his hand. He distinctly felt it, and closed his hand upon it, noticing as he did so, that the box behind the stone was open and empty.

"So you had it all the while?" he said. "Well, I forgive you!"

He attempted to take hold of her garment, and draw her to him, but she glided from him, and as he spoke the lamp suddenly went out, and he found himself speaking so loud that he expected the household to come rushing in. So vivid had been the impression, that he called Chione, at first softly—seeking her in the dark with outstretched arms. Then, in an instant, a wild terror seized him. He called Hylas, ran to the door, and unfastened it, almost falling over Hylas, who was asleep on the threshold. There was a lamp outside, and Crassus brought it in, followed by the sleepy Hylas, frightened and bewildered at being aroused in this way.

"Who has been singing at my door?" said Crassus. "Did I not say I was ill, and would be quiet?"

"No one sang, Master. I have been asleep there all the while," said Hylas, blinking his sleepy eyes in the lamplight.

"Any one might do anything while you snore like twenty hogs, as you always do!" said Crassus. "Hold the lamp while I look for something."

Hylas took the lamp, while Crassus hurriedly looked in every cranny in which a ring might be hid—turned over the cushions and coverings of the couch, and searched upon the floor, still believing that some trick had been played upon him, and that Chione had been there, and had slipped away by the connivance of Hylas. The fumes of the wine still clouded his brain, and he clung with obstinate persistence to the belief that he had actually held the lost ring in his hand, and had dropped it when he had tried to seize Chione. The superstitious importance which he had attached to the loss of this ring—as though it were in some way connected with his fate—made him search for it with a fierce anxiety which terrified Hylas, who thought he had gone mad with grief and rage at losing Chione.

At last Crassus gave over searching, and sat, sick and trembling, on the couch. "What hour is it?" he said, not looking at Hylas, but staring at the stain of oil on the floor.

"I think it is a little past the middle of the night, Master," said Hylas, trying to suppress a yawn.

Crassus, with Hylas lighting him, next searched the house; but Chione was not there; all the doors were fastened, and bore no sign of having been tampered with.

CHAPTER XV.

"THE KEY OF THE DUNGEON."

THE Emperor's return to the Palace was interrupted by a little incident which stopped the procession for a minute or two. As it was crossing the New Forum —where the unfinished columns of the Temple of Pallas Minerva caught the rosy light of sunset—a woman suddenly rushed forward, threw herself on Clodianus, who was walking beside the imperial litter, and clung to him with sobs and cries.

"What is the matter?" called Domitian, opening the sliding window of the litter an inch or two. Even in summer he never used curtains, as affording less protection.

"I am his wife!" shrieked the woman. "Illustrious Caesar, give me justice! I am his wife. Here is his child!"

An old woman came forward as she spoke, and held up a child for Domitian to see. The guards had closed in, and were standing closely round.

"A beautiful child, too," said Domitian. "Is this the Jewish woman you spoke of?"

"Yes, great Caesar, I am she!" said Theophila, eagerly. "Then he has not abandoned me! I said he had not!"

All this while Theophila's arms were locked round the neck of Clodianus with the strength of despair. As for Clodianus, this was about the worst moment that Theophila could have chosen to reappear in his life. He was entirely occupied with his passion for Chione, and half distracted with fears and suspicions —doubting the Emperor's good faith towards himself, and sorely troubled to know why Chione had fainted. He was in a bad temper, and his first thought on seeing Theophila had been that perhaps the Emperor would make her reappearance a pretext for retaining Chione.

"Do you wish to ruin me?" he said to Theophila between his teeth—and he looked so terrible that she recoiled, and he was able to shake her off. "Keep her from me," he said to a Praetorian. "She is a witch."

The soldier grasped her by the arm, but seemed somewhat uneasy at taking this liberty with a witch.

Thus set free, Clodianus stepped up to the Emperor's litter—disregarding the noisy objurgations of Susannah, who had lifted up her voice in a loud wail of reproach

and entreaty, imploring Caesar to interfere, and see that justice was done them. Amidst this din, Clodianus, his face close to the open window of the litter, protested that Theophila was a Jewess, and had tormented him with her religious observances. "How can a Roman live with a Jewess, gracious Caesar?" he asked. "Has it not been found to be impossible, even by some who have greatly desired it?" This adroit allusion to Titus and Berenice gained Clodianus's cause—for the moment at least.

"I'll have no Jewesses for wives to my Praetorians!" Domitian cried. "Send the woman away, and let her molest you at her peril. Let her look to it; her whole nation has displeased me—it wants but a little more, and I banish them all!"

Theophila, half fainting, Susannah screaming and protesting, were dragged away by some stationaries of the Sixth Cohort of the Watch, who, however, let them go as soon as it was impossible for them to overtake the Emperor.

Arrived at the Palace, Domitian ordered Chione to be placed in an apartment opening out of the peristylium, with Clodianus and another Praetorian to guard the door.

In obtaining possession of Chione, Domitian had not been actuated by licentious motives alone. Gross as was his sensuality, he was not a mere debauchee

—his passions never got the better of his instincts of self-preservation—and as soon as he heard that Crassus had a beautiful slave, he had determined to get possession of her as a probable means of learning Crassus's secrets, and especially of making sure as to his real relations with Lucius Piso—a point on which Domitian suspected both Piso and Crassus of practising the most profound dissimulation.

Clodianus, left on guard, had just succeeded in persuading his comrade, by the promise of a large bribe, to allow him speech with Chione, when Domitian came into the portico with Parthenius and the Praefect Norbanus. The moment Clodianus saw him, he perceived that he was in an ill-humour. He held in his hand a piece of parchment, and was evidently very angry with Norbanus.

"It might have been there long enough," Clodianus heard him say, "if it had depended upon you to pull it down! Where, I wonder, were the stationaries? Send me the Praefect of the City to-morrow!" Saying this, Domitian turned abruptly from Norbanus, and signed to Clodianus to stand aside from the door. "What, man, do you hesitate? Stand aside, I say!" he said savagely, as Clodianus, in an agony of jealous suspense, faltered, and tried to speak. "Who are you, pray, to expect that Caesar should give way to you? Do you suppose I took her from Crassus only to give her to you?"

Domitian had been a somewhat indulgent master to Clodianus; but if he had been alone now, Clodianus would—or believed he would—have drawn upon him, and slain him before he could summon help. Then he would have run down into the Forum, waving his bloody sword, and tried to raise the City. But even as this wild vision of vengeance flashed through his brain, he drew back, and Domitian flung the door open and entered. As he did so, Clodianus caught one instant's glimpse of Chione—her face all changed, ghastly and shrunken, and her eyes wild and staring. She was crouching against the farthest wall; but the door swung to again, and Clodianus saw no more.

As he had not been dismissed, he dared not leave the portico, and, indeed, to go or to stay would have been equally dreadful to him. He was not sure whether Chione had seen him or not—he fancied that her eyes had met his; but a strange and horrible spasm had passed across her face just as the door swung to and shut him out, and a vague horror filled him, as of something terrible about to happen. Had she seen Theophila? Women were always so jealous! And yet, no; it could not be that—she had fainted in the banqueting-hall. Did she love Crassus—that puny, sickly fellow, who looked as if he thought no one else good enough to wipe his feet on? Impossible!

Besides, had she not said a dozen times at least, that she prayed she might never see him any more? No; the horror of seeing herself about to pass into the power of Domitian was what had overcome her. And for this his own folly was to blame. Fool, thrice-accursed fool, ever to have spoken of Chione to Domitian! Asking the wolf to help him get the lamb——

The door was violently opened, and Domitian came out, loudly bidding some one run for a physician.

"Quick!" he cried. "Lose no time. Fetch the first you can find, and some one run for Ascletario—he knows more than all the rest put together. No—not you"—this was to Clodianus, who had outstripped all the others, and was already at the door leading to the interior of the Palace. "You, too, Norbanus, you stay. For you——" Here he turned upon Clodianus in an ungovernable fury, foaming like a wild beast, and dragging him into the room where Chione was, roared rather than said, "Is this your doing? If I find it is, I'll have you crucified!"

"I am a citizen, Caesar——" began Clodianus; but the words died away in his throat, his knees knocked together, and he fell down in a heap on the floor, moaning like one torn by intolerable tortures.

There lay Chione, fallen just where he had seen her crouching, her body slightly arched backward,

her hands clenched, her jaw set, her eyes staring and seeming ready to start from her head, her face dark and livid, and terribly contorted. All round her lay the rippling waves of her hair—that, and something of grandeur still lingering in the lines of her body, even in distortion, were all that remained of the majestic beauty which but an hour ago had taken Clodianus's eyes with wonder and delight.

There was no need to ask him if he knew aught of this—the grief and horror of his countenance sufficiently proclaimed his innocence. Suddenly the frozen stiffness of Chione's body relaxed; the feet slid forward, and, like a bow unstrung, the whole body sank heavily, and lay flat on the floor, with a strange sound, like a dull, heavy sigh. It was, perhaps, only at that instant that her soul departed, and Clodianus, forgetting the presence of the Emperor, raised the *conclamatio*, and called on Chione in a voice which was heard far in the interior of the Palace.

"Be quiet, bellowing ape!" cried Domitian, giving him a kick. "Be quiet, I say, and give me that." He pointed to something which had fallen out of Chione's hand.

It was a ring—a fine cameo, engraved with the story of Circe and Ulysses. At the back of the stone there was a box, with a hinged lid, now open.

Domitian looked at this very carefully. There were still a few grains of powder in the box. He closed the lid, and it shut with a snap.

"I have seen this," he muttered; "but it is some time since. Ha! I remember!" He clenched his hand furiously on the ring, and his face grew purple; but he only glared at Clodianus, as not seeing him, but some one else behind him, and said nothing. As for Clodianus, he was weeping like a child.

The household physician presently came bustling in, and kneeling by Chione, felt for her pulse, and opening her robe, laid his hand upon her heart—uncovering as he did so that perfect bosom, which might have heaved above the heart of Argive Helen herself—and at the sight Clodianus beat his head against the wall.

"She is dead, illustrious Caesar," said the physician, rising. "My science is useless."

"What is in that ring?" asked Domitian, sternly, giving it to him; but first he pressed the spring and opened the box.

The physician took the ring very gingerly, and going close to a lamp, peered into the box, taking care not to inhale any particles which might be floating about.

"This is doubtless poison," he said; "but what it is I cannot tell."

"Fetch hither a dog, and try it on him," said Domitian to those who stood round.

While some one went on this errand, Domitian talked apart with Norbanus. Suddenly, her approach unheard by any one, Domitia entered hastily, asking what was the matter. She was already very pale and agitated; and on seeing the dead body of Chione she uttered a shriek, and started back in terror.

"Why do you come here?" said Domitian, turning from Norbanus, and speaking with brutal roughness. "Go away, you fool! Or, stay—do *you* know anything about it?" He caught her by the wrists, and dragged her to the light.

"The Immortal Gods be my witnesses—I know nothing!" said Domitia, with such earnestness that he let her go, as if satisfied.

"Get away, then. I am in a bad humour, and might do you a mischief," he said, and Domitia, with one more shuddering glance at the corpse, and one look at Clodianus, went away—just as a wretched cur, which had picked up a living in the Palace kitchen, was brought in by a slave.

"I must have a bit of meat," said the physician. "And take him outside, that he may not see."

"So please you, here is some," said another slave, who had followed the first, with a platter.

The physician carefully shook out on a slice of the meat every particle of the white dust yet remaining in the ring, rolled it up in a ball, and showed it to the unfortunate dog, feigning to be about to throw it to him. When he had thus tantalised the dog into impatience, he threw the meat, and the luckless object of his experiment, snapping greedily at it, swallowed the deadly morsel at a gulp.

"Now, watch him," said the physician.

Just then a slave entered, and stood waiting till permitted to speak.

"What is it?" asked Domitian, impatient of the interruption.

"So please you, Caesar, Ascletario the mathematicus is come."

"Fetch him instantly!" cried Domitian, and as Ascletario—his thin, keen face grown thinner and keener than ever—entered, with a respectful salutation, the Emperor said hastily, "Watch this dog, and mark what befalls him."

Even as he spoke, the dog gave a spasmodic leap, then trembling, sat down and howled.

"Is it poison?" asked the astrologer.

"*You* should know that," replied Domitian, keeping his eyes fixed on the dog, who in another minute or two was taken with a shuddering, which ended in a violent convulsion and foaming at the mouth.

Uttering piercing shrieks, he rolled over and over, and presently fell dead.

After Domitian had gone, and while the servants were removing the body, Clodianus observed a crumpled parchment—the same which Domitian had had in his hand when he came into the portico. Clodianus picked it up, and smoothed it out. He knew enough Greek to make out the sense of the verses scrawled upon it—

> "Altho' thou gnaw my root, yet shall my fruit suffice
> To pour on Caesar's head in sacrifice."

Clodianus had but just read this, and replaced the parchment on the floor, when Parthenius came in hastily, picked it up, and went away.

CHAPTER XVI.

VENUS IS AVENGED.

From the troubled slumber into which he fell at last, Crassus awoke with a racking headache. The tempest of emotions of all kinds through which he had just passed, and the too much Falernian in which, in spite of his resolutions, he had indulged overnight, had upset his liver. The ghastly shadows of the night had retired for the time, along with the actual darkness, but there remained an aching void, a restless uneasiness, a humiliating longing for Chione, and an impotent rage against those who had deprived him of her, and the cynicism which was the habit of his life only added self-contempt to all these other miseries. Fierce was his debate with himself.

"I am forgetting all my philosophy," he said, as he forced himself to swallow some boiled cabbage—a coarse and distasteful dish, but, as every one knows, an infallible remedy for the after-effects of wine. "The man who does not let his passions carry him

away is master of all those who do. Passion blinds us, so that we do the very thing most calculated to defeat our own object. Here am I, agitated and confused, just when I ought to be most cool and collected—letting the purpose of years be imperilled by the emotions of a few hours—*I*, who have mocked at such emotions! Truly, one would think I had given in to that dictum of the Stoics—that the greatest of all pleasures is pain! The paradoxical fools have a method in their madness, after all. But, up, Publius Calpurnius, up! Hold firm with thy will, for the will makes the man; the will, and the will alone, lifts man above the beasts, and one man above another. Would to the Gods that I had never seen Chione! Oh, well says Lucretius—

> 'Nor do they miss the joy who love disdain,
> But rather take the sweet without the pain.'

If I believed in magic, I should think the jade had bewitched me. Bah! the only magic is the stronger will. But how ill has nature compounded us! To the strong arm she unites a dull brain or a feeble will; to the strong will a feeble arm or a dull brain; and the quick, far-seeing brain she curses with a vacillating will. Oh, thou mass of inconsistencies called man! Surely some God went mad, and in his madness dreamed, and his dream took shape in man. Man is chaos incarnate; his folly ever keeps pace

with his wisdom, and like a madman who builds up to pull all down again, so is man. So we come round once more to the only solution—

'Pleasure, that guide of life, and mistress too.'

But pleasure enjoyed discreetly, so as to

'Take the sweet without the pain.'

Yes; well says Lucretius—

'He's Tityrus, that lies opprest
With vexing love.'

Yet he himself, they say, perished by love. So Nature revenges herself on us for discovering her secrets! But that I—*I* should give myself over to be the sport of another's will—the will of a woman, of my own slave! Little fool! what a spitfire she is! She and Domitia will be well matched. Ha! ha! ha!"

Crassus laughed—a strange, hysterical laugh, which scared Hylas, who was listening at the door. Then, as his imagination conjured up a picture of Chione and her new master, a fit of almost insane fury seized Crassus. He dashed to the ground the plate from which he had been eating, and taking up the three-legged marble-topped table, hurled it on the floor with such violence that he broke it, and deeply indented the tesselated pavement. Then, panting and exhausted, he threw himself on the couch. Hylas, in a terrible fright, had run away screaming, and spread

the alarm that his master had killed himself, and presently the Major domo ventured into the library, followed by half a dozen of Crassus's personal attendants.

"What is this? What do you all want?" said Crassus, hearing the opening of the door and the shuffling of feet.

"We heard something fall, and thought you were ill, Master," said the Major domo—and, taking in the disorder of the room, he thought to himself, "Our Master has been drinking precious hard. He is not one to smash a fine table because he has had a cup too much."

"I upset the table. Carry it away, and see that the bath is got ready—very hot—do you hear?—and I will vomit first."

When, soon after noon, a messenger—not Clodianus—summoned Crassus to the Palace, "on business connected with his office," as Master of the Revels, the mockery struck Crassus as forcibly as though he had been a Stoic. Crassus was in the bath when the Emperor's messenger came. Annoyed as he was at being compelled to go to the Palace that day of all others, he did not suspect that anything had happened, or if the phantom of the night ever recurred to his memory, he thrust it from him. What most troubled him was the dread of seeing Chione. Nothing

would please Domitian better than to show Crassus what he had lost. Domitian had never loved any one, except, perhaps, the two women for whose sakes he committed so many crimes. He distrusted his favourites, and loved to make them his sport, play them off one against another, and let them feel how insecure they were.

It did not escape Crassus that the Palace attendants eyed him strangely, and he saw at once that Domitian was not in the mood of insolent triumph in which he had expected to find him, but was, on the contrary, in his most ferocious humour. He was sitting upon a couch in the portico, and there were many persons present—among them, Parthenius the Chamberlain.

"Is that your ring?" the Emperor asked sternly, the moment he saw Crassus—and he held out the fatal cameo.

"It is my ring, Caesar. I lost it more than a year ago," replied Crassus. A deadly superstitious horror came over him, but he retained enough presence of mind to know that any subterfuge would be worse than useless.

"How did you lose it?" demanded Domitian, fastening his blinking eyes on Crassus, the ominous redness—blood-redness—of his face making him terrible to behold.

"It was after a banquet. Primus, my cousin

Lucius, Parthenius—you will remember it, Parthenius? —Martial, and a few others were there," replied Crassus. "Quintilian was also of the number. Some of us drank too much wine, and in the morning I found I had lost this ring. I searched the house, examined all my slaves, went to all the pawnbrokers —if they are examined, they will remember—but could never find it."

"Had you no suspicions?" asked Domitian, as though he would bore into Crassus's very heart, and drag out the truth.

"I suspected one person," said Crassus, and in spite of himself his voice faltered.

"Whom?"

"But even if I was right," said Crassus, eagerly, "I am convinced that person only took it from a foolish idea that I might do myself a mischief with it."

"How a mischief?" asked Domitian. He had never for a moment removed his eyes from Crassus.

"The ring has a box at the back of the gem," replied Crassus, "and there was some powder in it, which the man who sold it to me—I bought it many years since in Alexandria—told me was poison. I do not know whether it was or not—— "

"That is a lie," said Domitian, with suppressed fury.

"May I perish, Cæsar, it is the truth!" said

Crassus. His manner was calm, but his face was livid.

"Who did you think had stolen it?" asked Domitian, still in that awful voice which reminded Crassus of the growl of a lion, when he crouches on the sand of the arena before he springs. "Speak!" he cried, as Crassus hesitated, "or your senator's robe shall not protect you—no, not yours, nor any other traitor's!"

"I imagined that Chione might have got it," replied Crassus. He felt like a beast driven to bay, but his very despair gave him a semblance of self-possession.

"And you allowed her to bring it to the Palace? Perhaps you hoped she would poison *me?*" hissed Domitian. As he spoke, he thrust out his foot, and happened to touch the lion, who lay asleep by the couch. The wild beast growled, and Domitian, seizing a whip which lay on the couch, struck him a heavy blow across the loins. The lion sprang up, snarling—yet cowed—and retreating, lay down again farther off. "Speak!" said Domitian, his hand still grasping the whip as it lay on his knees—he looked as though he would yet more willingly lay the lash across the shoulders of Crassus.

"Caesar, such an accusation can only be made in jest," said Crassus, firmly. "If any one has accused me——" His eye had just fallen upon Clodianus, standing on guard at the door leading to the atrium.

Clodianus was pale and stern. It instantly occurred to Crassus that he had deceived himself—Chione had never loved him, and now, having fallen in love with Clodianus, was trying to ruin her old master. Domitian would give her her freedom for accusing him. Crassus seemed to see it all in a flash, and to see that he was lost. "Will you condemn a Senator, Caesar, on the accusation of a foreigner?—a master on the testimony of his slave?" he said—he thought he was calm, but his words seemed to fall over each other.

"Do not agitate yourself; it does not become a Senator," said Domitian, who never lost an opportunity of sneering at the Senate. Crassus's visible panic had greatly quickened Domitian's suspicions. He now believed that Chione had swallowed the poison because she neither dared murder himself, nor disobey Crassus. Having come to this conclusion, his cat-like love of prolonging his victim's agony reasserted itself. "Come," he said, in his gentlest tones, which those who knew him dreaded more than his wildest outbreaks of fury, "come, you can, no doubt, explain it all."

"Caesar, I know not as yet of what I have been accused," said Crassus, who was terribly afraid he might be on the wrong tack, after all. Domitian liked to set traps for people; the ring might be only

a stratagem to surprise him into some admission. Well, Chione could not betray what she did not know, and he had never told her anything.

"Come, come, my dear Publius, don't say you do not know," said Domitian, in a tone of remonstrance. "Sit down beside me, and let us talk of it calmly! You can, no doubt, explain all that is suspicious——"

"May I perish, Caesar, if I can tell you more than I have already told! I never tested the poison—in so many years it must have lost its virtue. I bought this ring years ago. I wore it constantly——"

"I remembered it well; it is a fine gem," interrupted the Emperor, mildly.

"I lost it at the supper I mentioned, and could never hear of it since."

Domitian turned from him and whispered to Parthenius, who listened leaning over the back of the couch.

In his confusion—for, although he contrived to stick to his story, he was in the utmost confusion and perplexity—Crassus had turned the ring about in his fingers, until, pressing the spring, he inadvertently opened the box. The thought flashed through him that perhaps *this* was the moment for which he had bought the ring. He knew every mood of Domitian, and knew but too well that when a suspicion once entered his mind it lurked there for ever. One

moment's resolution, and he could swallow that little pinch of white powder, and have done with it all—forget Chione, too; and suddenly there came into his mind the words of Lucretius—

> "What tho' a thousand years prolong thy breath,
> How can this shorten the long state of death?"

Yet it seemed foolish to conclude so hastily that all was discovered. More desperate fortunes than his had mended. Marius returned from the marshes of Minturnae to be the Master of Rome. And yet, again, this might be the one only moment—the ring might be taken from him.

He had been carefully holding the ring, so as not to spill the contents of the box. Now, as Domitian was still whispering in Parthenius's ear, he lifted the lid. He started, and uttered an exclamation, which made Domitian instantly turn from Parthenius, and thrust his right hand into his bosom.

"The box is empty, Caesar," he said, joyfully, holding out the box and shaking his toga to prove that he had spilt nothing. "Surely my innocence is apparent now! See!" He shook the empty box.

"Yes; it is empty now," said Domitian, watching him. "It is empty now; but yesterday it contained poison."

"Does Chione accuse me?" cried Crassus, with a despairing gesture. "Confront me with her! This

is her revenge because I refused to give her her freedom!"

"You shall be confronted with her," said Domitian, and something in his tone smote Crassus with fresh dismay. Then Chione *had* accused him!

"I am glad I always despised the human race!" thought Crassus, rage and hatred for the moment almost conquering the fear of death. Clodianus, to whom the Emperor had given some order which Crassus did not clearly hear, had drawn aside the curtain, and a file of Praetorians was entering the portico.

"You shall see Chione," said Domitian again, and Clodianus, at whose throat Crassus longed to spring, signified to Crassus that he must go with them.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE SLAVES' APARTMENTS.

Crassus was conducted by his escort to a part of the Palace in the direction of the Great Circus, where were the apartments of the household servants. Led by Clodianus—whose face seemed to Crassus to wear a peculiarly sullen and ferocious expression—the soldiers halted at the end of a narrow corridor. It was so dark, that Clodianus called for torches. As soon as they were brought, he took one, and signing to a soldier to take another, led Crassus a little way down the corridor, past several uncurtained doorways, and stopping at one, entered. The room was small, and empty, except for a couch, on which lay something covered with a linen wrapper. As Crassus saw it, his knees smote together, and great spots of blackness floated before his eyes, so darkening his vision that he felt rather than saw Clodianus turn back the sheet, and hold his torch so that its light fell on

what lay upon the bed. Crassus saw the golden hair, the face—horribly changed in death—the marble arms, the rigid bosom, the flaring torch, the dark face of Clodianus; but the torch burned dim, the darkness closed round—Chione was a floating mist of light—the air seemed full of noises.

"He has swooned," said a soldier. Crassus heard him, and tried to speak, but could not. He felt himself reel, and thought that he fell; but he had really fallen some moments before. He did not know how long after it was that he heard another voice say, "Has *he* poisoned himself too?" But he understood the words, and knew that Chione had swallowed the poison in the ring. "I was right; my fate hung upon the ring," he thought. He opened his eyes, and saw that he was in the corridor, the soldiers crowding round him, their torches flashing in his eyes. By a tremendous effort, he rose to his feet, rejecting the assistance of the soldiers. Clodianus stood with the same gloomy, half-averted face.

"I am guiltless of her death," said Crassus to him. And then the tension of his nerves suddenly gave way, and he burst into hysterical tears.

The soldiers thought he wept for the danger of his situation. They did not understand what had happened; but they had not the smallest doubt of his guilt, nor that a plot for Caesar's murder had failed,

resulting somehow or other in the death of this girl, who must have been a handsome wench, shocking as she looked now. As for Crassus, he must have died if he had not allowed himself the relief of tears. Yet, poignant as his grief was, he was able to think, even as he wept, that surely these tears would prove to Domitian that he had not compassed the death of Chione.

He was not left long thus. Clodianus presently intimated to him that he must return to the presence, and Crassus, in a pitiable state of mental and bodily exhaustion, was obliged to obey.

"Two of you support him," said Clodianus, seeing him stagger; and thus, leaning on two soldiers, Crassus retraced the dreary, ill-lighted labyrinth of the slaves' apartments, until the leaves of a great folding-door were flung open, and he found himself in a large and sunny peristylium, which communicated with the Great Portico.

Domitian looked at Crassus, when he was again brought before him—a death-boding look, it seemed to Crassus, although Domitian was at the moment speaking quite calmly with Piso. Crassus immediately perceived that all the persons who had been at the banquet were present—Primus, Parthenius, Regulus, Messala, Quintilian, and Martial—who looked considerably sobered. But there had been nine guests

—who was the ninth? Ah! it was Arulenus. And Crassus felt his cheeks grow paler still.

Domitian was evidently inquiring into the circumstances connected with the loss of the ring, and Piso was explaining that, as he and some other of the guests had retired early, he knew nothing of what had happened later in the evening.

"Which of you left early?" asked Domitian, shortly.

"I myself, Sir, Messala, Quintilian, Regulus, Martial, and Arulenus Rusticus," replied Piso.

"Rusticus!" exclaimed Domitian, his face darkening. "By the Gods, Crassus, you keep good company!"

Parthenius came forward. He saw that it was time—there is a great deal in having the first word.

"The illustrious Piso is right," he said, in the unctuous tones of a freedman. "They all left us early, and I and Primus alone remained. We drank rather hard. I fear our conversation was unworthy of Stoics—but then the Stoics had retired." Parthenius said this with flippant insolence. That fling at the Stoics was artfully designed to please Caesar, who hated their very name. "My memory is not very clear," continued the Chamberlain. "Perhaps Primus may remember more. All I know is that Crassus praised Venus and the pleasures of love, and

went and put his ring on the finger of the statue of Venus which stands in his dining-room, and swore to be her faithful votary."

"I remember it too," said Primus; "but, it must be owned, Caesar, that we were all very drunk. But I remember that Crassus told me afterwards he had lost his ring."

At last, Domitian professed himself satisfied, and dismissed every one except Crassus, whom he made sit down beside him on the couch, and seemed to take into as great favour as ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MEETING ON THE APPIAN WAY.

The pious care of Clodianus performed the last rites for Chione. Her body was burnt at a *bustum* for slaves of the imperial household, a little to the left of the Appian Way, very near the Columbarium of Livia's Freedmen.

Here, on the evening of the next day after her death, the body of Chione was laid upon the pile, and Clodianus, with averted face, set the torch to the wood. Very few persons were present besides the *libitinarii* and *vespillones*—only a few passers-by—country-fellows returning from a booze at the taverns outside the gate, or waggoners and muleteers going out to Bovillae.

Theophila had spent the whole day at the gate of the Palace, watching for Clodianus. No one paid any particular attention to her—it was common for persons having petitions to present to wait thus. Susannah brought the child, and sat there, too, for

several hours—the three crouched together at the foot of the broad steps leading down to the Via Nova. But Clodianus never appeared, though many came and went from the Palace, and the guard was changed, and the living streams flowed all day in and out of the heart of Rome—beating so strong down there in the Forums, that its pulsations were felt to the very ends of the habitable world.

In the early part of the day, Theophila got into conversation with some of the Palace underlings, who were coming and going. Later on, some people recognized her as the woman who had been asking for Clodianus the cornicularius for so many days past. Some of the guards jeered her, and asked her to tell their fortunes. At last, when these coarse pleasantries became too obstrusive, Theophila bade her grandmother take the child away; but still sat on, waiting, because some one had said that Clodianus might be off duty in the evening.

It was near sunset, when a servant of the Palace, whom Theophila knew by sight, passed by. Theophila called him, and, taking a silver denarius from her purse, "I will give you this," she said, "if you will get me speech of Clodianus."

"I can't do that," said the man; "but I can tell you where you can find him, and get speech of him yourself—he's going to-night, at the second hour,

to perform the funeral rites for the slave-girl of Crassus, whom he gave to Domitian at the banquet last night. She poisoned herself—not, they say, without suspicion of treason."

"She is dead, then?" said Theophila, pale with horror—though she thought, "Now, perhaps, he will return to me!"

"Dead as Antony," said the man. "It was hushed up. She did it directly she reached the Palace. They say there was a conspiracy—it was planned to get Caesar to ask for her—then she was to poison Caesar in the night. But he got wind of it—she saw she was discovered, and—*pouf!*" The man made the motion of dispersing a pinch of dust, to intimate Chione's self-extinction. "Clodianus, who had been promised her when Caesar was tired of her, was awfully cut up about it, and asked permission to bury her. It's at the second milestone on the Appian Way, just beyond the Burying-ground of Livia's Freedmen—don't you know it?—on the left, as you go from the City, and a little beyond where you turn off to Bacchus. I know he'll be there, because he sent me up to Venus, to order the funeral."

Theophila had chosen an inauspicious moment, and she knew it. But she could no longer endure the suspense. She must know her fate. So she concealed herself among the tombs, near the place of burning.

She saw the humble procession approach; she saw Chione laid on the pile—all swollen and discoloured—of all the riches of her beauty, only the rivers of tawny hair were left. She saw the flames spring and crackle, and all that tawny hair vanish in a sheet of fire. She saw the magnificent form of Clodianus bowed down with grief, and the sight maddened her; but still she remained concealed until the flames were quenched, and the ashes collected, and deposited in the little niche of the Public Columbarium, in which Clodianus had purchased for them a foot of space.

When it was all done, Clodianus sent the undertakers' men back to the City, and himself sat down on a seat placed in front of a great man's tomb, and leaned his head upon his hand. The summer twilight had faded, but the warm summer moon was coming up over the Sabine Hills, flooding the purple sky, and drowning the stars. The tombs cast strange, distorted shadows—some like crouching giants, some like monsters, fantastic and terrible—and the huge rotundas, pyramids, and towers seemed to Theophila to be about to fall upon her.

"Clodianus!" she called, "Clodianus!"

He started violently, and sprang to his feet.

"It is I, Clodianus," said Theophila, stepping out of the shadow. "Clodianus! you did not mean those cruel words yesterday? I will not reproach you—

though for you I abandoned my people and incurred the wrath of my God."

Clodianus had taken Theophila for a ghost, and had been so horribly frightened, that at first he could not speak. But now he recovered himself

"You accursed Jewish witch! out of my sight!" he cried furiously. "You preferred your people to me—you wore me out with your tears and laments in Philippi—you were jealous of the very stones of the street—and now you have followed me here to ruin me! You made a public scandal yesterday, on purpose to spoil me with Domitian; and you caused the death of this woman—worth six hundred of you!"

"Now I know that you seek a quarrel with me, and that they were in the right who warned me of the perfidy of Gentiles!" cried Theophila, her indignation carrying her away. "This woman—this slave-girl—this mistress of Crassus's—whom you preferred to me——"

"Silence!" thundered Clodianus. "How dare you speak of her thus? Beware—rouse me not!"

"You can kill me, if you please," said Theophila, calmly. "Death has been better to me than life, ever since I saw your face. But as for this woman, all the Palace knows that she killed herself because she was discovered in a plot to murder Caesar."

"It is a lie! A lie of Tartarus!" shouted

Clodianus, and the tombs re-echoed his voice in hollow sighs. "She saw you throw yourself on my neck, and thought I had betrayed her! *You* destroyed her, *you!* And how do I know but that you cast the Evil Eye upon her? And who are you to speak of Crassus? You, who are his spy! Yes! I know all! I know that you took his money to spy on me! It was you who told him I spoke to Chione! I know not why I keep my hands off you! But if ever I see you prowling about the Palace again, I will call the City-guard, and have you locked up! I will give you a bill of divorce, and, if you ever trouble me again, it shall be the worse for you!"

He turned from her, and began to walk at a great pace toward the City. Theophila stood in the moonlight, watching him, until the sound of wheels lumbering over the deep ruts in the tufa-paved road aroused her. It was a train of waggons belonging to an importer of works of art. In the first waggon, a Jupiter, but partially disguised by the sackcloth wrappings, lifted his sceptre; and behind, an Ajax brandished his spear.

CHAPTER XIX.

"YOU CANNOT KILL YOUR SUCCESSOR!"

Domitian, in proportion as he loved to outwit others, resented being outwitted himself, and he considered that by the death of Chione he had been outwitted. He suspected Domitia and Parthenius, but concealed his suspicions, was apparently reconciled to Domitia, and was more gracious to Crassus than he had been for a year past.

But the fears which had so long pursued him were pressing on him more closely than ever. In his youth, the Chaldaeans had told him he would die by the sword, and many other soothsayers whom he had consulted, had warned him that his forty-fifth year would bring a great danger. Evening after evening, as he walked up and down the Portico of the Peristylium, he thought he heard the approach of stealthy footsteps, and glanced fearfully over his shoulder at the polished *phengites*, which some day, as his heart whispered to him, would reflect the upraised arms of

his murderers. Then the cold sweat would break out upon him, and he would breathe hard, and set his back against the wall, and stare wildly round, while in the shadows of the columns he seemed to see gliding figures. Unable to endure these terrors alone, he would be about to clap his hands to summon his attendants, and then would pause in the very act, lest he should be giving the signal for his own destruction. Every one who approached him might be the destined slayer! And whither could he turn for aid? Tiberius heaped favours on Sejanus, yet Sejanus conspired against him. Caligula was murdered by the connivance of his own freedmen and favourites; Claudius by his wife; Galba by Otho. The name of Otho naturally suggested that of Piso, and with that name other thoughts of terror came crowding in. "*You cannot kill your successor*"—the words seemed to ring in his ears.

As Domitian entertained these thoughts in the blood-stained chambers of his soul, he did indeed hear a footstep. He started, and clutched his dagger. But it was only Parthenius, come to tell him that his commands had been obeyed, and Epaphroditus was dead. Domitian looked at Parthenius in the gathering dusk.

"It is twenty-seven years ago," he said, "since he killed his master, but justice has overtaken him at last!"

He fancied Parthenius changed colour. He must watch him more closely.

The summer days went on. The people, crowned with garlands, had witnessed the sacrifice of the gilded ox, the matrons had burnt incense to the Fortune of Women, the Knights had ridden in procession from Mars Without to the Twin Gods in the Forum, and the Mundus had been opened. At Albanum, Domitian gave Shows, with foot-races of virgins, and combats, and himself condescended to display his skill in archery—at two shots planting a pair of horns in the head of a boar.

Meanwhile, people were still talking of portents or prodigies, and still the storms continued—not in Rome only, but all over Italy. September was one of Domitian's lucky months; but a great many people in Rome knew that the 19th of the Kalends of October was the day foretold to him as his fatal day. Everything was known in Rome—even Domitian's dreams. He often dreamed now that Arulenus Rusticus came to him with a drawn sword, all bloody.

But it was not safe to talk of these things. A soothsayer in Germany, Largius Proculus, by name, who had said that the storms portended a change of Government, was to be tried for treason.

No one had been yet named for the succession. Some, however, believed it had been offered to Piso.

Others spoke of—Lateranus! But these were mere rumours.

It had been arranged that Calpurnia's marriage should take place three months after Tertia's death. Aulus was pushing on the renovation of his house on the Viminal, but spent all his spare time at his future father-in-law's. Although, when he examined the Jewish brethren, Domitian had said the Christians were not worth punishing, Piso was profoundly anxious lest Aulus's abstention from sacrifice should be observed. Fortunately for him, the marriage customs of modern times made the matter easier—the now universally-adopted form of coëmptio, or mutual purchase, being purely a civil contract. But there were certain sacrifices to be performed, both before and after the marriage-day, the omission of which would excite attention. Piso one day spoke very seriously to Aulus on the subject, arguing that, as religion is at best a matter of opinion, and not of knowledge, and as the chief use of religion is to promote public morality, and render Government easier by the invocation of divine sanctions and prohibitions, the State has a right to decide on the religion that shall be adopted—adding that it had always exercised this right.

"And yet, Sir," said Aulus, "so greatly did our fathers respect a man's private conscience, that even

in this very matter they provided a loophole of escape. What could be more shocking than that frightful Secret Society which shrouded its iniquities under the name of Bacchanalians, and horrified all Rome in the Year of the City 566? The Bacchanalians had committed every abomination—they were murderers, lascivious, forgers, false witnesses—it is a shame to speak of the things which were done in their private assemblies. The name of Bacchus was become a name for secret poisonings, and all manner of hideous debauchery, and the only remedy appeared to be the putting down the worship of Bacchus altogether. Yet our fathers were not so much carried away by their just indignation as to command men to violate their consciences; and the very same day that they passed that decree, they also ordered that if any person believed that some such kind of worship was incumbent on him, and that he could not omit it without incurring guilt and offending religion, the matter should be laid before the Senate—a hundred members being present—and the Senate could permit these rites. I quote this instance to show how much our fathers allowed to a man's conscience. You, my dear father, have spoken as though the practice of our ancestors condemned the introduction of other Gods. If it were so, it would be nothing to the point, because no one can have a right to forbid the worship

of the True God. But even in those times our fathers perceived the injustice of requiring a man to commit a sin by not sacrificing. How, then, will you maintain that I ought to sacrifice, when to me to sacrifice is a sin?"

"I do not maintain it," said Piso, who, somehow, in these arguments always found himself taking a less exalted tone than when he was engaged in a philosophical discussion. "I only think that you make too much of so indifferent an action as scattering a few grains of incense on a block of marble. By refusing, you offend the conscience of the common herd—who see you, as they think, committing sacrilege. You encourage them in the belief that the Gods do not trouble themselves about human actions —I have always maintained that fear of the Gods is absolutely essential to keep the mob in order. In short, you set law and order at defiance, pour contempt on all the traditions of your country, and cut yourself off from the sympathies of mankind."

"Christ our Lord said that it must be so," said Aulus. "He said that He was come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter with her mother, and that a man must hate his father and his mother, and his own life, for His sake, and in comparison of Him."

"These are nothing less than the tenets of the

Cynics, dressed up in Eastern garb!" cried Piso, impatiently. "Just thus do *they* talk of indifference to human affection! What a farrago is your religion, my Aulus! It may suit the extravagant hyperbole of the East; but it is impossible it can ever make any impression on the sober mind of Europe—'foster-mother,' as Pliny calls her, 'of that people which has conquered all other nations.'"

"His natural good sense will soon show him his folly," he said to Aemilia. "His is too healthy a nature to find permanent satisfaction in a gloomy superstition. Let us above all things avoid driving him into a corner. I shall see that the auspices are taken—you need say nothing to him about it. As everything is to be done so quietly, his absence may not be noticed."

CHAPTER XX.

"NOW LET HIM STRIKE WHOM HE WILL!"

It had not escaped Domitia that Domitian's manner was changed towards her. More than once she had caught him looking at her in a way which made her shiver. Years ago, he had looked at her thus, when he discovered her infidelity with Paris. Now, another favourite had pleased her wandering fancy. It was dangerous to have an intrigue with a Court favourite—the risk of discovery was increased tenfold—the risk of betrayal, too. There were so many jealous eyes on the watch, so many greedy hands ready to thrust down a favourite from his perilous place. Domitian, with his habitual dissimulation, had tried to conceal his suspicions. We always fear those we suspect, and Domitian just now was afraid of the wind that blew, of the shadow that passed. In every rustle of the trees around the Alban Lake, he heard the cracking of the whips of the Furies and the steps of the inevitable Fates. He had quite for-

given Domitia for Paris—even now, it cost him something to resolve on her destruction. If for a short time he had loved his brother Titus's daughter more passionately, he had soon returned to Domitia, unable to live without her. Her impetuous insolence amused him; her ripe, warm beauty had never lost its power over him. But he knew she could betray him, and he had surprised some of the voluptuous glances she had cast at Clodianus. He knew that he himself was becoming daily more repulsive—bald, bloated, spindle-legged, his face a mass of corrupt ulcers.

Nor did Domitia ignore her own danger. There hung a mystery over the death of the slave-girl Chione, which Domitia had never been able to clear up. Clodianus—whose interest it was to keep in his mistress's good graces—had assured her that Domitian had taken the girl for himself. Domitian, in a violent quarrel which Domitia had had with him about the affair, had sworn he was going to give her to Clodianus. It mattered little—Domitian's infidelities were as notorious as Domitia's, who usually made no secret of them, but boasted of her escapades. But this new passion for Clodianus had alarmed Domitian's fears quite as much as it excited his jealousy. Clodianus was the very man to unite the suffrages of the soldiers, in case of a scramble for the Empire, and Domitian

—who everywhere saw his "successor"—made up his mind to despatch him at the first convenient opportunity.

Meanwhile, as the fatal day approached, Domitian employed all the resources of his subtlety to defeat Fate. He had planned it all—on such a day, he would remove this one whom he feared; on such another day, that other. He would weed out his enemies, so as to weaken those who were left, taking care, however, not to leave the field too bare, lest a new crop of pretenders should spring up. So long as there was no successor to whom men's eyes and hopes could turn, so long he was safe. If the Praetorians ever revolted, it would be in favour of some soldier—Clodianus, therefore, was to be feared. Norbanus, too—Domitian was not sure of *him*. Meantime, Domitian distributed a largesse—from the proceeds of the latest-confiscated estates.

Suddenly, in the end of August, he returned to the City. He said that the vapours of the Alban Lake were unwholesome; but he came because his presence made it more difficult for any one to undermine the Praetorians. A body of them could easily march out and fall upon him at Albanum, and help would be none. In the City, they would have to reckon with the mob, who liked an emperor who gave so many Shows.

It was the day after Domitian's return. The air of Rome was excessively sultry. A thin red mist dimmed the sun. The purple shadows on the Alban Hills and the brown patches of parched grass looked unnaturally near. Towards Soracte, a transparent bank of cloud was slowly rising into the zenith.

It was a little past midday, and Domitian was at dinner. It was his habit to eat heartily at dinner, and to take a very light supper, so as not to sleep too heavily at night; but to-day he had no appetite, and pushed away one dish after another, until at last a dish of roasted thrushes tempted him. He had of late shown Domitia increased affection, and would scarcely let her out of his sight. She reclined next him, very much out of humour at being brought back to Rome in this sultry weather.

"I am stifled!" she said. "Fan me quicker, Jocasta."

Her slave, a plump young Nubian, with bright bead-like black eyes and flashing teeth, waved the great peacock-fan faster.

"Have you heard, Caesar, that Piso's daughter is to be married to young Aulus Atticus?" said Parthenius, who was at table in a magnificent flowered silken robe.

"Who is Aulus Atticus?" asked Domitian, frowning.

"Oh, a nobody—of equestrian rank, however," said the Chamberlain. "His father was in the 20th, and was killed at the Grampians, in Agricola's victory."

Domitian's face darkened. This reference to Agricola struck him as suspicious, and when Parthenius added, "It is three years this very day since Agricola died," he could scarcely conceal his anger. Parthenius, who hated Piso, had referred to Agricola's death expressly to direct Domitian's suspicions to this marriage; but his dart recoiled upon himself, and Domitian forthwith resolved to put both him and Norbanus upon the black list.

"How dark it grows!" he said. "How close it is! Sprinkle more perfumed water on the floor—one can scarcely breathe."

By this time, the clouds covered the whole sky. The light was lurid; the Alban Hills could no longer be seen, except the extreme summit, whence, through a rift in the thunder-cloud, the roof of Latian Jove gleamed in a point of fire.

"The thunder-storms are beginning again," said Domitia, pouting. "Who ever heard of returning to the City in August? We shall all have fevers!"

"The storm seems worse at Albanum, Madam," said Norbanus. "Do but observe how darkly the clouds lower around the Mount."

Domitia looked, and saw that point of fire. "Ah!" she screamed, "it is like an eye watching us. Preserve us, Juno! and thou, sweet Castor, avert from us the storm!"

As she spoke, it broke overhead in a blinding flash of lightning, which filled the room with lambent flame, and a long reverberating peal of thunder, whose echoes circled round the Seven Hills. Domitia shrieked, and buried her face in the pillows of the couch. Domitian turned perceptibly paler; but he laughed at Domitia's terror, and declared that Minerva would protect him with her aegis, even from the bolts of Jove.

"Oh, hush!" cried Domitia, from her pillows. "It is impious, at such moment!"

The darkness increased, the air smelt sulphurous. A few heavy drops of rain fell on the terrace outside, distinctly heard in the pause of the storm. The guests ceased eating, and listened. Suddenly, a gust of wind shook the Palace, raising a cloud of dust on the garden-terraces. Another blinding flash, followed instantly by a tremendous report, made most of the guests leave their seats and run to the window, to see what damage was done.

"Did you not hear that sound like the rattle of falling blocks of stone?" said Norbanus. "I fear the Capitol is struck again."

As Norbanus said it, Domitian was taking a golden wine-cup from the hand of a servant, when, amidst a deafening roll of thunder, the forked lightning seemed to play all around at once. The slave dropped the cup, and fell backward on the floor. At the same moment, the heavens opened in a torrent of rain. The cup had fallen on the floor. Parthenius ran to pick it up, but dropped it. It was burning hot, and one side of it was fused as in a furnace.

On seeing this, Domitian, who was now purple with excitement, brought down his clenched fist so violently on the small table which stood at his elbow, that several dishes fell upon the floor. Then, as another, but less vivid flash passed before the windows, he cried furiously—

"Now, let Him strike whom He will!"

Even those degraded ministers of Domitian's pleasures shuddered at that impious defiance. But Heaven's vengeance tarried. No new bolt fell.

The storm quickly spent itself in that deluge of rain, which turned the Velabrum and the other low-lying parts of the City into pools, but most gratefully refreshed the exhausted air. In half an hour the sun was shining, and the storm-clouds, shrunk to a quarter of their bulk, were huddled together beyond the Alban Hills, to disperse themselves over the Pontine Marsh.

The servant, who was only stunned, was carried off, the spilled wine wiped up, and the guests did their best to imitate Domitian's example in finishing their dinner as though nothing had happened.

"I told you Pallas would protect us," he observed, looking round upon them, as he rose to retire for his siesta.

But although Domitian had thus braved it out, and even with impious words bearded the Thunderer Himself in the very act of launching his bolts, he was very ill at ease. Pallas, in whom he trusted, whose image stood in his chamber—Pallas *had* interposed her aegis between him and Jove's thunderbolts; but he was not so sure that she could protect him from the assassin's dagger. There was no time to be lost —he had perhaps waited too long already. What had Parthenius meant by speaking of Agricola?

"Gyrinus, you accursed ass! you are rubbing my feet too hard!" he said to the boy, who, as usual, was kneading his feet till he should fall asleep. "If you can't do it better than that, get away!"

He administered a kick to Gyrinus, who went off sulkily, and lay down on some cushions in a corner. Gyrinus was a pampered minion, not much used to kicks. He resented this one. It was the second time to-day. Caesar had kicked him this morning, because the spodium, with which he dressed the

ulcers on his face, was not properly mixed with wine. As if Gyrinus was the apothecary! Then, yesterday, before they left Albanum, Caesar pulled his ears because the lion had killed a peacock. That beastly lion was always getting him into trouble. Could he help the peacock coming too near? And the lion was generally afraid of the peacocks—almost as much afraid of them as if they had been cocks. The horrid noise peacocks make frightened him, and so did their great tails—rustling out suddenly behind them, like the sail of a trireme. But, yesterday, somehow or other, while everybody was busy putting things together for the journey, the lion killed one, and Caesar had been nasty ever since. He had better look out! Domitia—who never pulled his ears—had promised Gyrinus a gold chain as thick as her little finger for his neck, if he would get her a peep at Caesar's tablets. She pretended she wanted to see a recipe to make the hair grow, which she knew Caesar had got there, and would not let her have. But Gyrinus knew well enough that *this* was not the reason. Gyrinus could not read; but he knew that Caesar wrote down in his tablets the names of the people who had offended him. Gyrinus had been afraid to try and steal the tablets, but now he had a good mind to. It would be a famous opportunity—Caesar did not get much sleep the night before—

Gyrinus had heard him and Domitia quarrelling dreadfully—a regular row—because Domitia was in such a temper at having to come to Rome in August. He would be sure to sleep soundly this afternoon. So Gyrinus, curled up on his cushions, watched his master through half-shut eyes. The Emperor was reading his favourite book — *The Commentaries of Tiberius Caesar*. Gyrinus knew the look of it. Now, he was writing down something in the tablets. How angry he looked! Now he was putting his tablets under his pillow—he always put them there, along with the dagger, while he took his siesta.

In Domitian's chamber the air was heavy, the lusciousness of fresh perfumes clung about the curtains of the door. A great fly went buzzing up and down. "Now I suppose he will make me get up and catch that fly!" thought Gyrinus, who was in a thoroughly bad humour that afternoon. "Oh dear! how I hate Rome in August! It isn't fit for a dog! I wish the lion was dead—I've a good mind to get some poison for him. Perhaps Clodianus would give me some—he's a good-natured fellow, and I know he's got the ring that young woman poisoned herself with, for I saw Caesar give it to him."

Gyrinus fell asleep—lulled by the drowsy buzzing of the fly. Caesar slept too—so soundly that he did not hear the fly—though he was trying with all

his might to keep awake. A slight noise awoke Gyrinus, and looking about for the cause—for he, too, had his suspicions, and often dreamed that his master was being murdered—he saw the tablets lying on the floor. They had fallen from under the pillow.

A gold chain as thick as Domitia's little finger would be very nice! And Domitia was very pretty and very good-natured. On the whole, Gyrinus liked her—and Caesar was growing crosser every day.

As noiselessly as a cat going after a bird, Gyrinus crept across the floor. Domitian, lying on his back, with his mouth open, was snoring hard. He never moved, as Gyrinus with a beating heart stretched out his hand to the tablets.

"If he wakes, I shall say I was picking them up," he thought.

Domitia was sitting in the garden-portico, where the great purple autumn lilies, battered by the heavy rain, scented the air. Parthenius and Clodianus were with her. She was reclining in an ivory chair, dressed in a clinging salmon-coloured robe, embroidered with little green and gold leaves, and in her hands she held an amber ball. She kept turning it about as she spoke very low and earnestly to Clodianus, while Parthenius stood a little aloof. She gave a great start when Gyrinus came running out.

He checked himself, as he saw that Domitia was not alone. But time pressed—Domitian might awake! So he stole up, and pulled at the skirt of Domitia's dress; then, when she looked round at him, made signs to her.

"What is it? What do you want? Run away, Gyrinus! I'm busy," she said.

Gyrinus, however, would not go. He rolled his eyes, put his finger in his mouth, and assumed so extraordinary an expression that Domitia's attention was aroused.

"What is it, child?" she said. Domitia was always good-natured with Gyrinus.

"Put your ear down," he said. Then, as she did so, he whispered, "I've got 'em!"

"Got what, you troublesome boy?" asked Domitia.

"Put your ear down! *I've got 'em—the tablets,*" whispered Gyrinus.

Then at last Domitia understood. "Come here," she said, and pulled Gyrinus away to the other end of the portico. "Give them to me."

She took them, glanced over them, turned very pale, looked round at Parthenius and Clodianus; then seemed to make up her mind, and returned to her seat.

"Wait a moment," she said to Gyrinus, who was in a terrible hurry to get the tablets back again.

"I shall have something to show you here," she said to the others. "Such a funny recipe for making the hair grow—a secret of the famous——" Suddenly, her countenance changed—she grasped Clodianus by the wrist, and pointed to something in the tablets.

Clodianus looked, and read his own name. "My name!" he said.

"Yours?" exclaimed Domitia. "I did not see yours. I pointed you to *mine!*"

And, sure enough, below "Clodianus," was written "Domitia Longina;" and again, below that, "Parthenius."

"Look, Parthenius," said Domitia.

Together, the three read the list. Piso's name headed it; then followed Pliny, and several others; and then, with a space between, the names of almost every one of the Palace officials. Norbanus and his colleague Petronius headed this second list. Then came Entellus, the Keeper of the Records; Sigerius, Clodianus, Domitia, and, lastly, Parthenius.

"A very good recipe for the hair, isn't it? I should think it would answer," said Domitia, when they had read the names. "You are a good boy, Gyrinus, and I will not forget my promise. Now, run and put back the tablets—Caesar laid a wager I should never find out his recipe, and he will be angry if he discovers our trick."

"It's not a recipe—she looked too frightened," said Gyrinus to himself, as, after gently insinuating the tablets under Domitian's pillow, he withdrew to his cushions.

Meanwhile, Domitia was hastily consulting with Clodianus and Parthenius.

"The only thing," she said, "is to strike first. Norbanus and Petronius, when they know their names are *there*, will join us. The Praetorians will follow them——"

"It is an awful risk," said Parthenius.

"Fool!" said Domitia. "Will you stand trembling till the guards come to take you away? If I asked you to conspire to place some other Caesar on the throne, I could understand your hesitation; but this is to save all our lives. If *he* lives, *we* die—that's certain. Has he ever relented?" Domitia forgot that he had once relented towards herself.

"We cannot, as the gracious Augusta says, stand like sheep waiting for the slaughter," said Clodianus, gloomily. "Risk or no risk, I for one am ready to strike a blow for my life."

"I have long suspected he meant me mischief," said Domitia. Then, leaning back in her chair, and looking up in his face, she gave him a languishing glance, and whispered, "'Tis for your sake he destroys me."

"By the Gods, I will save you!" he said, crimsoning, and laying his hand on his sword.

"Hush!" she said, with a glance at Parthenius, who, completely unmanned, was shedding tears. "Come, Parthenius," she continued cheerfully—but her cheeks seemed to have fallen in, and she drew her breath quickly—"our fate is in our own hands! If we are prompt and determined, we may save ourselves, and rid the world of a bloodthirsty tyrant. His end has been foretold—be it ours to fulfil the prophecy and accomplish the will of the Gods! But we must use the utmost caution. One imprudent word or act, and we are all lost. I charge you, Parthenius, to warn Norbanus to-night, and bring me his answer. He and Clodianus must be our leaders. And now go, and do not be seen together. And the Gods be propitious to us!"

CHAPTER XXI.

CALPURNIA'S MARRIAGE-DAY.

The marriage was fixed for the 4th of the Nones of September. Meanwhile, nothing had been heard of Caius, and Piso and Aemilia were growing anxious—fearing collisions at sea, storms, pirates, a hundred dangers—and Domitian had commented suspiciously on Caius's delay. It seemed as though he would not arrive in time for the wedding.

All else was ready. On the Kalends, Piso and his family returned from Aricia to the Coelian, and little by little Piso saw his plans for a quiet wedding frustrated by the officiousness of his friends. Now it was Regulus, who declared that, if he was not invited, he should take it as a personal affront! Now it was Fulvia, who protested that, if her dear Aemilia did not make Aulus ask *her*, she would positively never speak to her again! However devoutly Aemilia may have desired this, of course there was nothing for it but to smile, and glance deprecatingly at Aulus. He

did his best. Blushing and embarrassed, he tried to say that of course he should be glad to see any of Calpurnia's friends at his poor house, but the recent bereavement made any great rejoicings out of place—Piso had desired that all should be done as quietly as possible.

"What nonsense, my dear Aulus!" cried Fulvia, vivaciously. "How *can* an old friend like me prevent your being quiet? I'll be bound you have invited Messala, and Verginius, and——" Fulvia was just going to mention the names of some persons who had been lately put to death for treason; but recollected this just in time, and, to cover her confusion at having nearly made so dreadfully ill-omened a mistake, said —with what her friends called her charming frankness, and her enemies her amazing effrontery—"Now, tell me whom you have invited?"

Thus driven into a corner, Aulus was obliged to own to Messala, Verginius, Corellius Rufus, and half a dozen other of Piso's friends, as well as to a few of his own.

"A set of old fogies, my dear boy!" cried Fulvia. "I'm sure you will be quite glad of me to enliven you! I shall come—and bring Cotilus—though he admires Calpurnia so much, that I'm quite jealous! Our sweet Calpurnia! After keeping her under lock and key all this time, Aemilia, you want now to

marry her on the sly; but we who love her won't have it! Our dear little Tertia would never, I'm sure, have wished to prevent her sister being received with proper honours in her husband's house. You ought to ask as many guests as your rooms will hold, Aulus!"

This rather coarse reminder of the inferiority of his fortune to that of his bride brought the blood to Aulus's cheek—but what could he say? And Fulvia spared him the trouble of replying.

"I shall not expect an invitation—I shall *come!*" she said, effusively "Then papa-in-law cannot scold you. What a stern old Cato it is! Aren't you afraid of him? *I* shake in my shoes, I can tell you! I believe he thinks me too frivolous to live! But, really now, if one may not have a little fun at a wedding, one had better be buried alive at once! Well, Aemilia, the Gods preserve you, and our sweet Calpurnia!—*can't* she spare a minute? Well, never mind! I shall see her on the 4th!"

Fulvia made Aulus put her into her litter, joking with him all the time upon the artfulness she declared he had displayed.

"Oh, you rogue, you!" she said, wrinkling up her nose. "I've found you out! Of course, you must please papa! Of course, you don't want to turn your wedding-feast into a silicernium, with all these old

mummies—Verginius, I believe, was born in the reign of the Divine Augustus, and is about a hundred! How they will mumble out their congratulations to be sure! There'll be a run upon the dentists for a supply of false teeth! How clever of you to give me that hint! It wasn't slow of *me* to take it so quickly either! Tell me, Aulus, what *do* you talk to Piso about? The laws of King Numa, or the Punic Wars, I suppose? Castor! how dull it must be! Does he *never* unbend? Oh, I know he's a stupendous man! I admire him *enormously—no* one admires him more than I do! Only I'm such a simple, ignorant person, you see, that I feel so *dreadfully* small beside him! Ah, a great honour, of course, to be his son-in-law—and then, our sweet Calpurnia! What would not some of us give for that hair! And yet—would you believe it?—I heard Hippia—you know she's come back? Yes—really! Quarrelled with her Sergius—his warts got *too* large, and then he took to drinking—she's back, and they say Veiento is actually going to make it up with her! She's very rich, you see"—Fulvia said this in a whisper, bringing her face close to Aulus's. "Well, as I was saying, Hippia—she's awfully jealous, you know, and *I* always thought her hideous—we were talking of Calpurnia the other day at Aurelia's, and Hippia came in, just as I was saying, 'What lovely hair Lucia Calpurnia has!' and Hippia

declared it was *dyed*—I assure you she did—and stood us out that it was! I was so vexed, that I couldn't help saying, 'Well, my dear Hippia, it may have been dyed when you last saw it; but it isn't dyed now —that's all *I* know.' You should have seen her face! Cotilus says I was silly to offend her; but I couldn't help it. Fancy saying our sweet Calpurnia dyed her hair!"

So saying, Fulvia kissed her fingers to Aulus, skipped into the litter, cried, "Till the 4th!" and called to the bearers to set out.

An untoward event occurred the night before the marriage. A little past the seventh hour, Piso's whole household were aroused from sleep by a great noise, and, rushing out of their chambers to see what was the matter, they found the great doors burst open. The terrified janitor, flinging himself at Piso's feet, protested by all the Gods of all the nations under heaven that he had been himself awakened by the noise, and knew nothing. Outside in the vestibule, and down the street, all was quiet, and the only persons to be seen were a few of those homeless beggars and night-wanderers, who would, if not discovered by the watch, avail themselves of the shelter of a great man's porch. Two or three of these persons, being seized by Piso's orders, were interrogated; but they, too, declared that the noise had

roused *them*, and that they had seen no one. As it was impossible they could have opened the doors without the connivance of some one within the house, Piso ordered them to be let go, and the doors to be refastened; but he believed that a trick had been again played upon him. It would have been easy to withdraw the bolts from the door. The Barracks of the Peregrini were near—a score of these foreign soldiers, leaning shoulder to shoulder, ten on a side, could have pushed open the doors, and have escaped down a side-street, and hidden themselves in doorways until the search was over. Piso tried to reassure the women with this explanation, and for his sake they pretended to believe him, and went back to the pillows from which sleep had been banished.

Calpurnia, recovered a little from her first terror, sat up on her bed, thinking of her whole life up to that hour; of the new life to begin to-morrow; of Tertia, who had gone down into the Shades a child, her cup of life hardly tasted; of her father; and, lastly, of Aulus, who would to-morrow be the one nearest to her in all the world. And, swift as lightning, the whole scene in the Arena rose before her. "Aulus Atticus, a Christian!" Suddenly, and almost without her own will, she fell on her knees, and for the first time invoked the God to whom Aulus prayed —the Good Shepherd who had laid down His life for

the sheep. There could be no harm in praying to Him—Jove was Father of Gods and men, yet men prayed to Aesculapius. Jove slew him indeed—but only lest men should escape death through him. And so perhaps He had let this new Aesculapius die, because he loved men too well. "*In all their afflictions, not an elder, nor a messenger, but he himself saved them; in his love and his pity he redeemed them, and bare them and carried them all the days of old.*" This sentence, out of one of the ancient Hebrew books (of which Aulus had a Greek translation) had taken such hold of Calpurnia, that she had learnt it by heart; it came to her now, bringing with it a strange sense of consolation. And from a little bag which hung round her neck, and held her talisman, she took a parchment, folded very small. Aulus had given it to her—it contained a few of the sayings of Him whom Aulus called the Good Shepherd and the Saviour of the World. Strange words—"*Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are they which are persecuted for justice' sake.*"

As Calpurnia read these words—so new, so strange, so unearthly, in which human pride and greatness-

could bear no part, because here the last must be first, and the first last—a peace she had never known filled her heart. Surely her father might be included in this blessing, since it was for his virtues that Domitian hated him! Scarcely knowing what she did, she appealed against the omen to this mysterious Consoler, who had said, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest."

The dawn was breaking when Piso woke from an uneasy sleep to find Aemilia weeping.

"Aemilia! dearest wife!" he said, taking her to his breast. "Do not weep—this should be a happy day. Our child goes to a good man, who will love and protect her."

But Aemilia sobbed more bitterly.

"I know not why you should conclude that the omen is unfavourable," he said, after a while. "Why not say that the doors opened to let the daughter of the house go forth? Why not take it as signifying the consent of the Lares and Penates to Calpurnia's marriage?"

"Do you think so?" asked Aemilia, eagerly. "Oh, that it were so! My heart is sick with fear, Lucius! To-night, as you slept, you cried many times 'Thrasea! Thrasea!' and once you said, 'Look upon me, Agricola—look upon me, my captain, my father!"

"I dreamed," said Piso—"a long, confused dream—the opening of the doors awoke me from it."

"Tell me your dream, Lucius! Let us offer a sacrifice, to avert the omen."

"Calpurnia can do so to-morrow, when she offers the nuptial sacrifice," said Piso, smiling. "As for my dream, I have forgotten it. Let us not be sad, my dear wife, on our daughter's wedding-day! Let us for to-day forget our grief."

"Oh, my little Tertia, my little Tertia!" sobbed Aemilia. But, though she called on Tertia, it was for Piso that she wept.

Cornelia had interpreted the portent in another manner. She took Piso aside early in the day, and asked him if he had forgotten Caius? Something might have happened to *him*. She herself had dreamed of him three nights in succession—always as hastening towards Rome. She even proposed to defer the marriage—her former objections seemed to have revived. But Piso reminded her that such an omen as the bursting open of doors had always been believed to refer to the head of the house.

"Domitian will not live long. If we can but escape him for a few days more, we are saved," she said in a low voice.

"It will be as the Gods will, mother," he replied. "We cannot escape our destiny; but may, while avoiding it, run to meet it."

"You have ever said that, son. I wish you may not repent of your acquiescence in destiny!" said Cornelia. "At any rate, bethink you. Now, at the last moment, you have an opportunity given you of deferring this marriage. It will certainly result in Calpurnia's joining the Christians—an indelible disgrace to us."

"Which we share with the Flavii, since Flavius Clemens was one of them."

"What is a Flavius to a Calpurnius?" asked Cornelia, with haughty scorn. "A mushroom of yesterday—while the name of the Calpurnian gens is engraved on the eternal brass of the Fasti!"

"Mother," said Piso, "in all else I will obey you; but I must give my child a protector before I die. Reflect, mother—if Aulus is obscure, his very obscurity may be his safety. And where will you find such a young man? Compare him with her other suitors——"

"I have nothing against him but this wretched folly," said Cornelia. "However, I have spoken."

In the course of the morning, Aulus came in, and reported that in the night the doors of the Flavian Temple had burst open of their own accord.

"I know how little importance you attach to omens, my dear father," he said. "But they sometimes fulfil themselves."

"Aulus," said Piso, "as you say, I attach little importance to omens, yet I had a dream this night—being, indeed, awakened out of it by the bursting open of the house-doors, of which, no doubt, Aemilia has told you—which seems to me to be no common dream. I would not tell it to Aemilia—she, poor soul, is sufficiently disquieted and troubled, without any imaginary woes. But I will tell it you, that, if anything should come of it, you may tell it to her. I thought that I was lying on my bed, with Aemilia beside me—indeed, it seemed to me that I was awake, so natural did all appear—when suddenly there passed over me a very cold and keen wind, such as might be made by the wings of a great number of birds; and immediately there entered a long procession of persons whose faces I knew. Some I had seen in their life-time, others I knew from portraits or statues. There were so many that I cannot tell them all—many of them I saw only, as it were, in confused groups. But I knew that they were all persons who had been unrighteously slain. There were Germanicus and Agrippina, holding each other by the hand; the young Britannicus, and Octavia the wife of Nero; Ostorius Scapula, and Arruntius, and Albucilla, and my own grandfather Lucius; Julia Drusi and Corbulo; Burrus and Seneca; Rubellius Plautus, and Soranus and his daughter Servilia—still clinging to

him and weeping, as she did at the trial—and Junius Silanus, the Proconsul of Asia. And then I saw the venerable Thrasea—and he showed me his wrists, with the veins still bleeding—and the two Helvidii, and Senecio, and my uncle Arulenus. And after him came a great company—Glabrio, Plautius Lamia, from whom Domitian took away Domitia, and Titus Sabinus, and many more. And I saw Flavius Clemens—who smiled upon me, and I thought he said something; but when I awoke, I could not remember what it was. And last of all came Agricola—I knew him, although he held his toga before his face. And I thought that I leaped up to embrace him—and then I was awakened by a great noise, like the sound when battle is joined. But, afterwards, I slept again, and it seemed to me that I was on some windy promontory, such as is on the British coasts, and that Thrasea and Agricola were there. And even now I can see the eyes of those who passed before me, and their waving hands—as though they would summon me."

CHAPTER XXII.

A HAPPY HOUR.

All was ready. Tryphosa and half a dozen maids were putting the finishing touches to the bride, while Cornelia and Aemilia—who had laid aside their mourning, and were magnificently attired in coloured silk dresses, embroidered with gold and silver—looked on and advised, and all the household slaves who could steal away from their duties were assembled in the corridor to see their young lady when she came out.

"The shoulder-clasps are a little too high, Tryphosa." "That fringe is turned under, Tryphosa —there, to the left." "That ribbon is out of place." "Is there not a speck of dust upon her slipper?" "Just turn, Calpurnia, and let us see how your dress falls behind."

Calpurnia a little flushed, but quiet, stood in the middle of the room, turning hither and thither as she was bid.

When everything else was arranged to the satisfaction of Cornelia and Aemilia, one of the attendants

handed a spear to Cornelia, who—amid the great excitement of the onlookers—those outside boldly thrusting in their heads to see the ceremony—divided the bride's beautiful golden hair with the point, and parted it into six locks. As this was being done, Calpurnia trembled excessively, and seemed ready to faint.

"Silly child! I'll not hurt you!" said Cornelia.

"I am not afraid, grandmother—but it is so strange!" said Calpurnia.

"Ah!" said Cornelia, as she began to fasten flowers into the tresses. "It seems to me but yesterday that my mother was parting my hair, the day I was a bride!"

When Calpurnia's hair was decked with flowers, and spread out over her shoulders, the woollen girdle was tied round her waist, and the flame-coloured veil was wrapped round her, while from time to time a suppressed titter came from the corridor. In the atrium—which was completely thrown open, and decked with flowers—the guests were assembling. Fulvia had taken care to spread abroad that although Piso had, out of decorum, issued but few invitations, if his friends chose to drop in to witness the marriage, he would be pleased. As the hour approached, therefore, the atrium was crowded.

"We are come, Piso, to congratulate our sweet

Calpurnia" said Fulvia, who had taken upon herself the marshalling of these uninvited guests, "and to accompany her to the house of her husband. We shall then, of course, retire, and to-morrow we shall take her the presents we have prepared for her. Where is the sweet nymph? Ah! here she comes—like Venus going to meet Adonis!"

Calpurnia appeared, led by her mother and grandmother, dressed in the long white tunic with the purple fringe and the red sandals and veil of a bride. The guests made way for her to advance to where Piso stood. The marriage-contract had been signed some days before, and Piso now formally handed over the dowry. Then the Augur stepped forward from beside the Altar of the Penates, and declared that the omens were favourable.

Calpurnia had not once lifted her eyes. She did not look up even when her father took her by the hand and led her forward. Some one put a silver denarius into her hand, and then Calpurnia heard Aulus say, "*Lucia Calpurnia, wilt thou be to me mater familiae?*" And Calpurnia, staring at the ring upon her finger, which Aulus had given her at their betrothal, tried to say, "I will;" but her voice died in her throat. However, she managed to say in her turn, "*Aulus, wilt thou be to me pater familiae?*" And Aulus said, "I will," loud enough to be heard by every one. Then

he gave Calpurnia a silver denarius, and Calpurnia gave him the one she held, and Piso, leading her to Aulus, placed her hand in his, and said solemnly, "May good come of this thing!"

"The Gods turn it to good!" said every one present.

Then for the first time—while Aulus clasped her hand tight in his—Calpurnia looked at him for one swift moment. He was pale. Piso, observing him, was pleased with the gravity of his countenance; it was that of a man who feels that he has accepted a trust. Calpurnia tried to think of him as though he were not hers—her husband! The word seemed suddenly to have lost all meaning. Was it possible that she was really married—a wife—the wife of Aulus? She looked around her at all the familiar things—the hangings on the walls, the Altar of the Penates, the fountain, the images of her ancestors. But nothing now seemed familiar—the crowd of people, the wreaths of flowers, the roses which strewed the floor, the red veil through which she saw it all—everything reminded her of the strangeness of the occasion, and of the great change which the saying of a few words and the giving and receiving of a silver penny had wrought in her.

"How do you feel, Calpurnia?" whispered Fulvia.

Calpurnia tried to smile, but she could not speak.

She grasped the hand of Aulus more firmly, and looked imploringly at her mother. Aemilia came and embraced her, and then every one else, who had been only waiting for this, crowded round, and congratulated the newly-married pair.

They were still receiving their friends' embraces, when there was a commotion at the door, and a young man in travelling-dress made his way through the guests. The moment Aemilia saw him, she cried, "Caius! Caius! Oh, my dearest son!" and, rushing to him, flung her arms round his neck.

"I come in a happy hour!" said Caius, as he embraced his parents. "Where is the bride? Where is my brother Aulus, that I may wish them joy?"

"Here we are, Caius," said Aulus. "And happy indeed that you have returned in time to be present at our marriage-feast!"

Caius lifted his sister's veil, and kissed her again and again. "How beautiful you are grown, sister!" he whispered. "I thank you for giving me Aulus for my brother. Where is Julius?" he said aloud, and when he had embraced his brother, the guests pressed round him in his turn—greeting him, telling him he was grown quite a man, and resembled his father; and Caius responded with a very engaging modesty, and asked the venerable Verginius, who was there as the most honoured guest, for his blessing.

"And where is Eudoxus?" asked Piso.

"He is with me—he is but gone to greet his wife and change his dress, and will be here directly," replied Caius. "And I, too, must attire myself in a manner more befitting this illustrious company—with your permission, I will excuse myself——"

"If I go with him for a moment, our friends will pardon me?" said Aemilia, who was weeping with excess of joy. All her fears were forgotten—she was radiant as she drew Caius away.

"What a happiness for our sweet Aemilia!" exclaimed Fulvia, as soon as she had gone. "A mother myself, I know how to sympathize with her! My own sweet Tiberius, you know—I have just betrothed him to a charming young lady. By-the-by, where *is* Tiberius? Sosthenes was to bring him. Now that he is betrothed, I wish him to see a little society, and he was to come to-day to congratulate our sweet Calpurnia." Here Fulvia laid her finger against her nose, assumed an arch expression, and turning to the person next her—who happened to be Messala—dropped her voice to a loud whisper, and said, "The little rogue always admired her, you know! Tiberius! Tiberius! where are you, my pet? Oh, there he is! Come and salute the bride, Tiberius! Dear boy, he's *so* shy!"

Tiberius, a singularly ungainly youth, with

prominent eyes and no chin, whose toga seemed in his way, now appeared, pushed forward by his preceptor, the much-enduring Sosthenes.

"He's leaving me, now that Tiberius has assumed the manly toga," whispered Fulvia to Piso. "He's going to be reader to Ponticus, and collect his facts for him. You know Ponticus? Martial makes such fun of him; but then, you know, Martial makes fun of everybody. I'm really not sorry to get rid of Sosthenes —he's *too* awkward! You would *never* take him for a Greek! And Tiberius doesn't like him."

"Did you ever see such a lout as that fellow Tiberius?" said Julius to Messala, when Fulvia had moved away, to shed her vivacity on some one else. "And do you know to whom he is betrothed? To Crispinella, the daughter of old Crispinus, who used to hawk fish in Alexandria. Fulvia's so awfully in debt, she looked out for the richest girl she could find. Crispinus used to live in a garret in the Suburra, next door to Trypherus, you know—the fellow that calls himself Doctor of Carving, and cuts up wooden wild-boars—our carver learnt there. Well, that's where Crispinus used to live, but now he's enormously rich—he's Princeps of the Knights! They say he gave six thousand sesterces for a big mullet! He lives on the Esquiline, close by Aulus. Disgusting, I call it! But I dare say she's good enough for

Tiberius. *I* call him a pig! I believe he's half an idiot."

All this time, Aulus and Calpurnia, blushing and embarrassed, were receiving the compliments of their friends. Presently Aemilia returned.

"We must take a little refreshment before we set out for the bridegroom's house," she said gaily. "We will not wait for my son Caius."

Accordingly, the major domo appeared, staff in hand, and bowing low, announced that the refection was ready, if the illustrious company pleased.

An elegant collation had been set out in the great triclinium. The wedding-supper would of course be at the house of Aulus; but as soon as Piso found that the officiousness of his friends and clients could not be escaped, he had—to save Aulus from being fairly devoured—given orders for a kind of dinner to be served for those who were not invited to the bridegroom's house. The little party of invited guests took the opportunity of slipping aside into one of the parlours, where wine, cakes, and fruit were brought to them. Here Calpurnia sat, with her grandmother beside her, and smiled at what old Verginius was saying, and wondered whether it was all a dream, and thought of little Tertia, and felt the tears well up into her eyes. Piso and Aemilia, with the bridegroom, were entertaining the other guests, who drank

the health of the wedded pair profusely, and emptied cups to the letters of their names.

"I thank you, my good friends," said Aulus, "for myself and my wife, and I regret that the smallness of my house does not permit me to invite you all to supper——"

"Never mind, Aulus," laughed Fulvia. "We'll come and see you to-morrow instead. I can't lose sight of our sweet Calpurnia—and besides, what a charming friend she will make for my little daughter-in-law that is to be! I foresee that my Tiberius will insist upon being married instantly, now he has seen how charmingly a bride looks!"

Caius, meantime, having washed away the traces of travel, was trying to answer a dozen questions at once. Yes, it was true, he told Fulvia, that Caesar had graciously commanded him to return, in order that he might be present at the contest on the Capitol, but he had unfortunately gone over into Asia, and so had not received the letter until months after it was written.

While Caius was telling of his journey, Crassus entered, dressed with great splendour in a supper-robe.

"I was detained at the Palace," he said, greeting the company; "but I come in time to escort the bride."

It was now dark, and the lamps had been lighted. With one accord, the guests rose, and streamed back into the atrium—the clients officiously making way for the more distinguished guests.

"I say, Laevinus," said Domitius, as he pulled his friend back out of a lady's way, "there's nothing like working the oracle. We've been too retiring—if we had pushed ourselves a little more, I verily believe we might have got a supper out of him once or twice a month, at least—'pon my honour, I do! You heard what Fulvia said? Take my word for it, she's right! He'd have felt flattered if we'd come, but he was afraid to invite us, lest it should look ostentatious! 'Pon my soul, I believe we've wronged him!"

"You were over in Asia before—with Aulus—were you not?" said Fulvia to Caius—and Calpurnia had a thrill of fear. Messala always said that Fulvia was a spy. How much did she know?

"And you had really had no news from Rome all that time?" she continued. "Why"—here she dropped her voice to what she intended for a sympathetic pitch—"I suppose you did not know that our poor darling little Tertia has been snatched from us?"

"My mother has told me," said Caius.

"Ah, you are right—it is inauspicious to speak of death at a wedding," said Fulvia, cheerfully. "What

a satisfaction it must be to see your sister given to a young man you esteem so highly! Ah, Calpurnia, you sly little puss! You knew what you were about —you were determined to have this handsome young bridegroom—positively the handsomest young man in Rome! I don't wonder at you—I'm in love with him myself! As I said to Ogulnia the other day——"

Ogulnia was a woman who had had eight husbands, and divorced them all, and Piso, who just then came up, could not forbear saying, "I could wish you a better friend, Fulvia, than Ogulnia."

"Castor! you are as strict as Caesar himself!" said Fulvia, laughing. "What would become of us poor women if we could not divorce our husbands now and then? You know I always call you and Aemilia 'Collatinus and Lucretia.' *You've* no idea of the corruption of morals! Husbands nowadays are shockingly bad, and really are only kept in order at all because they know we can divorce them."

"She is more shameless than ever," whispered Aulus. "But now, my darling, the moment approaches when I am to take my bride."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THALASSIO ! THALASSIO !

The musicians in the outer hall were playing snatches of the nuptial song. The paranymphi—three pretty boys, dressed in the praetexta—one of them a grandson of Messala—were standing near the bride. The grandson of Messala carried a torch of whitethorn, not yet kindled. The other torches were distributed by the servants to friends of the bride and bridegroom, who had requested this honour. Another boy carried a covered vase, in which were the bride's "utensils," and toys for children.

At this moment, Eudoxus came forward to pay his respects on his return, and Calpurnia, as she welcomed him home, saw her father's freedmen drawn up in a body, and all the household servants, crowned with flowers, thronging the doorways which led to the private apartments. But what startled Calpurnia most of all, and made her seem suddenly to wake up and realize her new condition, was the sight of

Tryphosa and two of the younger female servants —Tryphosa carrying a distaff, and the others a spindle and a hank of wool. Tryphosa looked the very picture of gladness, so that when Calpurnia saw her, she said to Eudoxus—

"This is truly an auspicious day, Eudoxus, since in it my brother and you have returned to us in safety!"

Piso stepped forward. "I already, while at Baiae," he said, "took some of the necessary steps towards the manumission of Eudoxus; but they were interrupted by my recall to Rome. It is fit that he should partake in the rejoicings of this auspicious day as a free man. Eudoxus and Tryphosa, be free!" He turned each round, and gave each a slight blow on the cheek. "Be witnesses," he said to the guests, "that Eudoxus and his wife Tryphosa are free persons."

Eudoxus and Tryphosa knelt and kissed his hands, with tears and blessings; but Piso cut them short, saying—

"The hour approaches—we must depart." Then he took Calpurnia by the hand, and, turning to Aemilia, said, in a voice which betrayed how much he was moved, "Aemilia, embrace our daughter!"

Calpurnia flung her arms round her mother's neck. It was proper that a bride should seem to be taken away by force, in memory of the Sabine women; but

Calpurnia clung to her mother in earnest, and Aulus and his friends had to use some gentle force.

"That's right!" said some of the servants approvingly. "It's a good omen when the bride can scarce be torn from her mother's arms!"

"She does it splendidly, the little puss!" said Fulvia to her *umbra*—who to-day, however, was not Cotilus. She had quarrelled with him the night before, and, to punish him, had brought Afer instead.

Calpurnia was clinging to her mother with hysterical strength; but Fulvia's speech, which she overheard, brought her to her senses, and, half sobbing, she allowed Aulus to take her away.

The three paranymphi instantly seized upon her—one taking each of her arms, while the third, Messala's grandson, whose torch was now alight, pranced in front of her. The other torches were kindled, as if by magic, and the nuptial procession, forming itself at haphazard, poured through the ostium, out into the vestibule, where a great crowd had collected, who received it with shouts and good-humoured jests, and prepared to follow with it.

The musicians struck up the nuptial song, amidst cries of "Io Hymen Hymenaee!" and "Thalassio! Thalassio!" And so, with music, and laughter, and tears, and the jests of the paranymphi—whose duty

it was to keep up the bride's spirits, so that she should go laughing to her husband—they set off down the steep descent by which they must reach the Via Nova.

First went the musicians, then the servants, then the freedmen, then the clients, and then, in the midst of the guests, who acted as a body-guard, the bride, the bridegroom, and the nearest friends — Piso, Aemilia, and Cornelia, walking close behind the bride, Aulus and his friends just in front of her. As they were crossing the Forum, Tryphosa thrust the distaff into Calpurnia's hands, saying that the bride ought to carry it herself.

The crowd gathered as they went. After all, Calpurnia's nuptial pomp was not wanting in splendour. The torches had multiplied themselves—there was a long line of waving flame. But, alas! these torches, and the half-illumined faces, appearing and disappearing in the gloom, painfully reminded Calpurnia of the night of Tertia's funeral. The proverb, "We live between the two torches," came vividly to her recollection, and haunted her all the rest of the way. Now they were laughing and jesting, and hurrying onward; then—so short a while ago—they went slowly, and in mournful silence. Instead of the long-drawn notes of the funeral trumpets, awakening the echoes of Hades, there were now the

sweet sounds of the flutes; but the joy and the sorrow seemed alike unreal.

"You haven't laughed this two minutes!" cried one of the paranymphi, propping up her arm more vigorously, and hurrying her on. "What do you bet that the bridegroom loses his way? Do you know what you've got to say, when they ask who's there? I learned it on purpose, so as to teach it you, in case you didn't——"

So he prattled on, and Calpurnia answered him—all the while she was saying to herself, "*Inter utramque facem.*"

As they began to ascend again, Aulus, with a few of his friends, pressed on in front, to receive the bride at his house. When he was gone, Caius walked in his place, next Calpurnia.

"Do you know, Lucius, that it was known this morning in the Palace that Caius had returned?" said Crassus, as they went up the hill. "That is, they must have known it *before* he arrived, since you say he reached your house only about the tenth hour. This is a proof of what I have always told you—all your movements are observed."

"The more reason for making no movements I would not have observed," replied Piso.

"Well," said Crassus; "you may be right. At any rate, it is now too late. We must put our faith in the destined day."

As soon as the nuptial procession reached the house of Aulus—the doors and doorposts were decked with roses, and flowers were strewn all over the vestibule—Tryphosa took the distaff from Calpurnia, and gave her the wool with which to bind the doorposts. One of Tryphosa's maidens handed her a box of ointment of swine's fat, and with this Calpurnia touched the posts, to avert enchantment.

Then the door creaked and fell back on its hinges, and the bridegroom appeared, with Euritius, one of his friends, behind him, holding in one hand a torch, and in the other a bowl of water; and Aulus said, "*Who art thou?*" and Calpurnia—thanks to her paranymphus—replied without tripping—

"*Where thou art Caius, I am Caia.*"

The distaff and spindle were put into her hands again, and her father, with others of the guests, who had been married to but one woman, carried her over the threshold. There was no fear of her striking her foot—Piso lifted her bodily into his arms, and set her down upon the sheepskin spread in the hall. Aulus delivered to her the keys of the house, and Euritius approaching with the torch and the bowl, Aulus and Calpurnia touched fire and water, and a slave washed their feet.

The wedding guests had already entered. The rest, with loud shouts of "Thalassio!" often repeated, at

last turned their faces, and went down the hill—the wedding party standing in the door, and watching them till they were half-way down. Crassus was the last to turn away. As he did so, several of the guests observed his extraordinary pallor. It had been whispered that he had once asked for Calpurnia, and she was looking so beautiful, was so sweet and modest a bride—it might well be that the thought of what he had lost had made his cheeks so pale.

"What! that heartless debauchee?" said Messala to Euritius, who suggested this. "No, my dear young friend, your voluptuary is always as cold as ice! Either he is ill, or he has had a fright—he looks like a man who has just seen a ghost—but he is not love-sick!"

They were all crowding into the triclinium. The whole house was decked with flowers and tapestry, and brilliant with a hundred lamps. They made it so hot that some of the windows had been opened—the Esquiline, as the City spread, had lost its reputation for fevers. But it was not the heat of the sultry September night—although it was so warm that the nuptial couch had been placed in the garden, under a great awning—nor was it chagrin at seeing Calpurnia given to another—nor was it even the memory of Chione, which made Crassus so pale. Messala was right; he had seen a ghost—many ghosts—the ghosts

of a troop of Praetorians. As the departing guests went down the street, like a retreating wave—the dancing torches bobbing up and down on the living stream—Crassus had seen the end of the street—far down, towards the New Forum—suddenly blocked by soldiers—the torches glanced on their helmets and breastplates, and the crowd, checked in its course, swayed backwards—Crassus had heard the women shriek.

"Eudoxus and Tryphosa," said Aulus to the new-made *libertini*, "I beg you to sit at supper with us."

The guests had been assigned their places—couches had been placed all round in the triclinium, as the guests so far exceeded the usual number. The great salt-cellars, which had belonged to Aulus's father, were set at the four corners of the table, but the Images of the Lares were not there. Piso, afraid lest the guests should remark upon the omission, hastened to pour a libation—as he was in the place of honour. The servants began to hand the meats and sprinkle the perfumes, the musicians without played a soft melody, and every one's tongue was loosed.

Piso looked round the room. The guests reclined or sat, with small tables by them, while in the centre stood the long table, glistening with old-fashioned silver. There were flowers everywhere—it was a cheerful scene. With the single exception of Crassus,

there was not a guest there whom Piso would have wished away. He looked at Calpurnia, as she sat beside her husband, and thought that it was long since he had seen her look so peaceful and untroubled. Just then, his eyes met Aemilia's. She, too, had cast off the veil of sorrow and anxiety which had for so long clouded her sweet face.

"Is Publius ill?" she whispered.

Crassus was still so pale as to be almost livid; but the expression of his face was more startling than its pallor. He seemed to be listening intently, but furtively. The guests were talking and laughing, and Piso at first heard nothing. But presently, now that he, too, was listening, it seemed to him that his ear caught a dull sound, repeated at regular intervals. He became certain that Crassus was listening to it too—and then it flashed across him that the sound was the tramp of armed men, and that it was drawing nearer.

Presently, Aemilia heard it. "What is that sound?" she said to him. "Do you not hear? It is like a wine-press being worked——"

"It is nothing," said Piso. And then he leaned towards her, as she sat by his knees, and put his arm round her waist, and said in her ear, "Aemilia, this spectacle makes me think of the day when you and I were wed. We have loved each other well, Aemilia,

and have known much sorrow and joy together. Let us drink to our son and daughter, and wish that they may be as happy as we have been, and may dwell together longer than we——"

"Why say that, Lucius? Oh, why say that?" said Aemilia, in sudden distress.

But Piso, without seeming to hear, bade a servant fill the cups, and cried aloud, "Let us drink a health, dear friends, to Aulus and Calpurnia!"

The guests held their cups to be filled; but the noise without increased—every one heard it now. That heavy tramp was crossing the atrium—and before they could drink the toast, a servant burst in, crying—

"The soldiers! The soldiers!" And while the guests all sprang to their feet, and Aulus clasped Calpurnia in his arms, the doorway was filled by armed men, and the Tribune who led them—a man whom Piso did not know—said, in a loud voice—

"Our Lord God, Domitianus Imperator, commands me to arrest Lucius Calpurnius Piso, Publius Calpurnius Crassus, and Aulus Atticus, all, I believe, here present!"

They were good men who heard him, and some of them had led the battle against the foes of Rome; but a shudder ran through the whole company. Aemilia and Calpurnia—who tore herself from Aulus—threw

themselves upon Piso, and clung to his arms. Cornelia, pale as death, rigid as stone, looked from Crassus to Piso, and from Piso back to Crassus, and hissed between her closed teeth, "Traitor, this is your work!" Crassus, as his name was mentioned, had fallen back on his couch, convulsively clutching at a corner of the cushion. His utter prostration attracted notice even at that moment, and every one in the room, remembering his altered looks of scarce half an hour ago, his late arrival that day, and all the old stories about him, believed that he had betrayed Piso.

Meanwhile, Piso, gently unloosing Calpurnia's hold, took up the cup which he had set down as soon as the Praetorians entered, and saying—

"Suffer me but to drink the health of my daughter and my son-in-law, and I will follow you," turned to the company, and said, "I pray all this honourable company to drink with me to Aulus and Calpurnia!"

He drank, but did not drain the cup. All the guests, with pale and troubled faces, followed his example, while Calpurnia, standing between her father and her husband, looked from one to the other, and wrung her hands like a distracted creature. For a moment there was great confusion, as every one pressed round Piso—so great, that the Praetorians

drew their swords. At this, Calpurnia, wildly snatching first at her father, then at Aulus, uttered one long piercing cry, and fell fainting. Her father caught her as she fell. He kissed her closed eyes—as though she had been dead, and gave her to Messala, who laid her down on a couch.

Meanwhile, Aemilia, trembling like a leaf, and supported by Cornelia and some of the other women, had slid from their hands, and lay on the floor, clinging to Piso's knees. He raised her, and embracing her fervently, whispered—

"Aemilia, by the memory of our love, I conjure you, do not make this moment harder for me!"

Then they took her from him, and the Praetorians closed round him. Others came in—the atrium was full of soldiers—they dragged Crassus from his seat with little ceremony, and got him out into the atrium. As they forced him along, he cried out—

"By all the Gods, I am innocent, and know nothing!"

"Mother," said Piso, as he embraced Cornelia, "console the others."

Then he embraced his sons. The soldiers grew impatient, and permitted him no other farewells. But Aulus, who had seemed stunned at first, broke from the guards who surrounded him, and running to Calpurnia, kissed her passionately, as she lay

still insensible, until the Praetorians dragged him away.

"The other persons must remain here," said the Tribune, and turned to follow the prisoners.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"QUONIAM IPSI POSSIDEBUNT TERRAM."

THERE was one moment's silence among the guests, as the Tribune let fall the curtain of the door, and the armed tread grew fainter. Then the youngest of the paranymphi—he who had been most loquacious on the way thither—broke out into a fit of childish weeping. Euritius stole to the door, and looked out —then went forth. Presently he returned.

"They have left a guard," he said in a whisper. "The atrium is half full of men."

Some of the tables had been upset, dishes lay on the floor, and long streams of wine running out of broken amphorae looked ominously like spilled blood. The guests shuddered, but could not turn away their eyes from it. Grapes and flowers were trampled underfoot, several lamps had been broken by the towering helmets of the soldiers. A piece of tapestry, torn from the fastening, hung by one corner. There was an indescribable air of disorder over all. But

what words can depict the faces of the guests, or Aemilia's speechless anguish, or Cornelia's terrible calm, or, worse than all, Calpurnia's piteous weeping, when she came to herself? Messala warned them, in a whisper, that all they said might be overheard—for the sake of those they loved, therefore, let them strive to control themselves and utter no imprudent word! Except for a whisper or two, the wedding-party sat so silent, that they could hear the soldiers in the atrium, as they talked and laughed with each other. After a time, Calpurnia's sobs ceased, and she lay still in her mother's arms. And so the hours of the night wore away, until—a little before dawn—a Centurion came in, and rather roughly informed the company that they might now depart.

As none of their litters had been suffered to approach the house, they were compelled to return home on foot. Calpurnia, who was completely exhausted, was carried by Messala. As for Aemilia, she appeared to be as unconscious of fatigue as Cornelia herself. Her fortitude surprised even Cornelia. Piso's last words seemed to have dried up the springs of her tears.

"Do not make this hour harder!" he had said. And Aemilia thought of Arria, who showed Paetus how to die, and no longer felt such courage to be impossible.

Perhaps Aemilia found it easier to be calm, because

she had no hope. The moment the soldier had entered the banqueting-room, she remembered the portent of last night. *This* was what it meant. Lucius would be condemned. In former days she had prayed that at least she might not see him die. Now all was changed in her, and she only prayed to be with him to the last. Yet as she prayed, the fiery anguish gnawing at her heart warned her that this calmness was but a deceitful lull in the tempest. Her anguish lay there, ready to leap upon her and overmaster her.

"By the memory of our love, do not make this hour harder!"

A few sleeping figures of beggars roused themselves to look at these returning revellers, and one, too sleepy or too stupid to observe the soldiers behind, called out—

"What hours! Oh, fie, for shame! Or perhaps you are going to the Circus to get a good place?" Then coiled himself up again, and went to sleep, thinking how fine a thing it must be to feast all night, and not go home till morning.

The cold gray dawn was stealing up into the sky as they crossed the Roman Forum. The Capitol rose, pure and ghost-like, into a sky so sweet and cool, that human rage and cruelty seemed to have no place beneath it. The Palatine's wilderness of palaces caught the full oncoming tide of day. The air struck

chill with the sharpness of autumn. The great rim of the Colosseum shut out the Alban Hills, and the hearts of these returning revellers turned sick with the sickness which oppresses us while day is still struggling with night.

So they toiled up the dark and narrow street, and came to Piso's door. There, too, a guard was standing. The door was opened instantly, revealing the ostium full of soldiers—most of them asleep on the floor. Messala and one or two others of Piso's most intimate or most devoted friends entered the house with the ladies. The atrium was lighted up; but the wreaths, disordered and faded, and all the other signs of festivity, only made it look more forlorn. No one spoke to them as they crossed the atrium—where also soldiers were sleeping, with cups beside them. But as soon as they were in the more private part of the house, some of the servants appeared, and whispered to Tryphosa. Tryphosa wrung her hands, and, turning to Aemilia, whispered, "Oh, my dear mistress, they have searched the house, and taken away my master's papers."

Scarcely had Tryphosa said it, when little Laelia, Calpurnia's maid, came up, scared and trembling, and stammered out, "There is a Centurion asking for you and Eudoxus!"

Even as the girl spoke, the Centurion came down

the corridor, holding tablets in his hand, and said, looking from them to the persons present—

"I am ordered to attach as witnesses certain slaves of the household of Piso—Eudoxus, Tryphosa—— "

"They are free persons," said Aemilia, hastily.

"I believe some preliminary steps were taken at Baiae, but never completed," said the Centurion, looking again at his tablets. "At any rate, however, I have their names here, and they must come with me." He clapped his hands, and some soldiers came in from the atrium. "Take these persons, and find me the others," said the Centurion. "Chrysippus, Laelia—— "

Laelia shrieked and fainted. To a slave, bearing witness meant undergoing the torture. Tryphosa had turned deadly pale, but had not spoken a word. There was an appalling silence as the Centurion took them away. Then the three women looked at each other, as shipwrecked men turn hollow eyes on their fellows, and dare not even say, "We are lost!"

Caius and Julius were, if possible, even more dismayed than the women. Caius, in particular, to whom the judicial murders in Rome had been only dim and distant rumours, was dumfoundered. All he could say to his mother was—

"But, mother, my father cannot be in any real danger! What has he done? Very likely Publius

has conspired, and they suspect my father may be implicated; but of course he will be released as soon as they see there is nothing among his papers of a treasonable nature! It is not as if he had written pamphlets—or even plays—like poor Helvidius—or made speeches in the Senate, like my poor uncles——"

So Caius argued. Then, seeing that his mother only wept the more, and his grandmother stared before her with stony despair, he faltered, and grew silent.

For a while Aemilia and Calpurnia gave way to the horrors of their situation, abandoning hope, and only remembering the long train of victims who had preceded them. Cornelia sat in silence, once only breaking it, in a terrible cry, as she beat her breast and tore her grey hair, "It is I—I, who am his murderess!" She thrust away Aemilia and her granddaughter when they approached to comfort her, and sat in that impenetrable despair while the light of day returned, and the others sank into the heavy stupor of grief, and kind forgetfulness gave them a respite from their calamity.

The hideous puzzle of oppression and wrong danced before Calpurnia's eyes like the image of some blood-stained labyrinth. What did it mean? Why did it happen? Was it always thus? Would it be thus

always? She had heard the frightful tale of the Proscriptions—Sylla's, Marius's, Antony's; then the bloody days of Tiberius, of Caligula, of Nero—one horror following another.

"Blessed are the pure. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the peacemakers." But Domitian is Master of the World, and good men are tormented, and wicked men triumph over them. "The meek shall inherit the earth"—how can that be, when it is the proud and the strong who inherit? Not Flavius Clemens, but Domitian inherits the earth!

All the impulses of Calpurnia's soul drew her towards Him who had said that the pure and the merciful are blest. If He had been still upon earth, she thought, she would have fallen at His feet, and cried, "Lord, I know not what Thy kingdom means, yet, let me enter in!"

With her heart full of these thoughts, she fell into a troubled sleep, and in her sleep it seemed to her that she was alone on a slope of the Alban Hills, and had lost her way. She sat, weary and frightened, by the roadside. And as she sat, she saw far off, a shepherd with a flock of sheep behind him. And she thought, "I will wait till he comes, and he will tell me the way." And she watched him as he came nearer and nearer, winding along the mountain-path, with his

sheep following behind, and as he came nearer, she saw that he had a lamb in his arms. Then, as he drew near, it seemed to her that he was taking another path, and would not pass by where she sat, so she rose, and ran until she overtook him. And he turned, and as he turned, she saw that the lamb was Tertia, and the hand which held the crook had been pierced; and he looked down at Calpurnia with eyes kind and yet terrible, and said in a voice which penetrated her heart, "What wouldst thou of Me?" And it seemed to Calpurnia that she fell on her knees before Him, and cried, "Help me! help me!" And as He stretched out His hand to lift her up, she awoke, sobbing and trembling, and could not believe it was a dream.

She was alone, and it was broad day. She had scarcely had time to perceive this, when her mother entered, calm, but with a strange look in her eyes, which made Calpurnia spring from the couch on which she lay, and run to her, and cry, "Mother, mother! what has happened? Oh! what has happened?" And Aemilia put her arms round her, and said, "Child, we are summoned to appear before the Senate."

CHAPTER XXV.

"CUM SUSPIRIA NOSTRA SUBSCRIBERENTUR."

THE prisoners were not kept long in suspense. No sooner did they arrive at the Palace than they were hurried to the Basilica, and presently Domitian entered, attended by Regulus, Veiento, Certus, and other informers, the Praetor and his lictors, the Quaestor, and a number of the Palace-guard.

Having taken his seat, Domitian sat for a few minutes silent, with downcast eyes. He held tablets in his hand, but did not consult them. Presently, Parthenius entered, and Domitian asked, without looking at him—

"Where are the witnesses?"

"They are here, Caesar," replied the Chamberlain, and in a moment the sound of many footsteps was heard, and some twenty or thirty persons were brought in in charge of lictors.

The first upon whom Piso's eye fell was Pansa, the overseer from Baiae. There were also Hylas—who

was crying bitterly—and an old woman and a young one, whom Piso remembered to have seen somewhere before. There were also a number of other persons, not of servile condition.

Domitian began to speak in a hurried, incoherent manner. With the blackest ingratitude, a conspiracy had been organized against him by persons whom he had loaded with favours—persons to some of whom he had already forgiven injuries which would have called down the vengeance of any other Prince! Perhaps these persons were not all equally guilty—it might be that some of them had been deceived by men worse than themselves. The truth, however, would come to light. By the help of Pallas, the traitors had been discovered before they could carry out their parricidal designs. Perhaps it would be found that others were involved in their guilt. And then, suddenly fixing his ferocious gaze on Piso, he continued in a voice, low and hoarse, like the roar of a wild beast—

"What shall be said of the traitorous general, who, after being pardoned his complicity in one projected attempt on the life and throne of his Prince, consorts with Mathematici, and pays them to circulate lying prophecies? Who sends his mother and his daughter—not once, nor twice, but many times—to inquire of sorceresses and astrologers how long the

Emperor shall live? Who plots with his kinsman to introduce a slave into the Palace, with a poisoned ring—— "

"By the Three Great Gods! By the Secret Name of Rome, which it is unlawful to utter! By your Father's Genius, Caesar!" cried Crassus vehemently. "The ring was stolen from me! I swear by the Twelve Gods, I am innocent!"

"And then," continued Domitian—his voice grew gentler as he went on, and now resembled the fierce purr of a cat over a mouse—"and then, while pretending to recall his son from Achaia, he privily sends a servant, with orders to him to remain away. And why? Lest he should become involved in the danger of his father's plot! The patron of traitors and sorcerers, the accomplice of the old impostor of Tyana in his escape from the very precincts of the Palace, the prompter of barbarian soothsayers, the author of seditious histories, the encourager of seditious writers, the friend of every one who was an enemy to the Prince! Lucius Calpurnius, what do you say to this indictment?"

Domitian paused, and lifted his heavy brows at Piso, as though he had pushed forward a battering-ram.

And Piso received the shock as steadfastly as a wall. "I am guiltless of all these things, Caesar,"

he said boldly. "If any one has accused me of any of them, he lies!"

"Then let the witnesses be examined," said Domitian, throwing himself back in his seat, and shading his eyes with his hand.

The great basilica was empty, except for the guards at the farther end, and the groups of prisoners, witnesses, lictors, accensi, and palace-attendants, all crowded into the tribune. The pale and haggard countenances and disordered dress of the witnesses, and the stern, immovable figures of the lictors, seen in this great empty, lighted hall, were more terrifying than if they had been seen in a crowded court. Aulus, perceiving the artful manner in which truth and falsehood had been intermingled, gave up hope. But to his surprise, no notice was taken of him, after the Emperor had asked him whether it was not true that his house had been inhabited by Ascletario?

"It is true, Caesar," replied Aulus.

"He was a minor, and had nothing to do with it," said Piso. "Nor did I myself, who was his guardian, know, until I returned to the City, that Demetrius the silversmith had underlet the house to Ascletario. I objected to him as a tenant. Far from resorting to astrologers, I have always derided their pretensions——"

"We have heard that you pay little honour to the

Gods," said Domitian. "Let Ascletario stand forth!"

The astrologer was pushed forward by a lictor. He appeared extremely depressed, but retained his self-possession. Being made to take the flint into his hands, he repeated the oath—

"*If I knowingly deceive, may the Father of Light, the City and citadel being safe, cast me out from among good men, as I this stone!*"

Then he cast the stone upon the floor. Questioned by Certus, he admitted the visit of Cornelia, but steadily declared that she had only consulted him about the marriage of her granddaughter. He had foretold sickness and calamity, which had come to pass in the death of her younger granddaughter; but he had said nothing about Caesar.

"Will you bring upon you the wrath of Jove, Maintainer of the Sanctity of Oaths, by denying that you have been consulted as to how long our Lord God —whom the Gods preserve!—is likely to live?" asked Regulus, raising his voice into the half-hysterical scream with which he terrified his witnesses.

"The question has been asked me—but not by Cornelia," replied Ascletario.

"It is enough," said Domitian. "He admits that Cornelia visited him, and that he has used incantations to discover the hour of our demise. What more is needed? Call the captain from Puteoli."

"Not incantations, Caesar—I am not a sorcerer," said Ascletario. "The things I foretell are written in the stars. I practice no magic——"

"Take him away, and keep him safely," said Domitian to the lictors. "Your lives shall answer it, if *he* escapes, like the old wizard Apollonius!"

The captain of a ship trading between Athens and Puteoli was next examined, who said that he had brought Crassus to Puteoli in the autumn of the year when Collega and Priscus were Consuls. Crassus had disembarked on the evening of the 7th of the Kalends of November. The captain was certain of the date, because it was his little son's birthday.

Several of Piso's slaves from Baiae testified that Crassus had not arrived at the Villa until the evening of the day following. They knew it because it was the same night the doors burst open.

"And they found there Arulenus Rusticus, that ape of the Stoics, and enemy of the sacred Caesars," observed Regulus, venomously.

"That is a small matter," said Certus. "There are witnesses who can prove that, a few days after this, Lucius Piso caused a witch to be consulted as to the probabilities of his becoming Emperor, and that he offered up a sacrifice at the Temple of Jupiter at Baiae, for the success of his schemes."

Several persons—tradesmen of Puteoli and country-

men—next testified to having seen Piso talking familiarly with Demetrius the Cynic.

"Demetrius has disappeared," said Regulus. "It is believed that he has fled to Ephesus, to Apollonius, and orders have been sent to have him arrested, if he is seen there. Apollonius also is to be brought to Rome——"

He looked at the prisoners, to see how they took this intimation. Piso returned his insolent glance with haughty firmness.

"Call the sorceress Theophila," said Certus.

Theophila was made to swear by her own God. She confessed to practising magic; but said it was of the harmless sort—the white magic—only to cure people or help them to find things they had lost. She had never predicted any one's death but once, and that was to a woman who came to her at night—and she did not want to tell *her*——

"Who was this woman? Answer, accursed Jewess, or I will have you racked!" said Certus, savagely.

"I am of Thessalonica, a Free City!" cried Theophila, desperately, terrified at this threat.

"That shall not protect you from the 'Little Horse,'" said Certus. "If you do not confess everything, you shall make the acquaintance of the fiddles. Who was this woman, I ask you, whose death you foretold?"

"She was a slave-girl belonging to the noble Publius Crassus," faltered Theophila. Then she beat her breast, and tore at her hair, and cried out, like one distracted, "This has come upon me for violating the Law of my Fathers! I swear by the God of Israel that I know nothing about the ring! I read in her hand that she would die shortly, and by a violent death. I was sorry for her, although she had gained the love of my husband, and I would not have told her what should befall her, but she compelled me."

"Why did she kill herself?" asked Regulus. Then, his voice rising, he shrilled out, "Why, I say? Why? Woman, tell me why she killed herself?"

"I do not know. By Raphael and the Seven Archangels, I do not know!" said Theophila—but her voice betrayed her.

"Accursed witch, you *do* know! Here, Carnifex, take her to the Question-room!"

A hideous Libyan, in a white tunic and a leathern girdle, came forward, and took Theophila by the shoulder.

"I do not know—but I think it was for love of my husband!" she shrieked.

"Who is your husband?" asked Domitian.

"Clodianus, the cornicularius," replied Theophila. "He abandoned me in Thessalonica, and I came to Rome to seek him."

"You lie! Caesar begged her of Crassus to give her to Clodianus," said Regulus. "Why, then, should she kill herself? But we waste time; tell us of the visit which Cornelia, the mother of Piso, made you, in Dama's Villa, at Cumae."

Theophila's replies to this question were suspiciously confused and contradictory. She did not know what she had been consulted about; but she believed it related to the marriage of the young lady. Whatever it was, her magic had failed—no answer had been given by the spirits whom she had evoked. Asked suddenly if she had ever seen Crassus in Rome, she at first denied—then, being confronted with a witness, confessed that she had been employed by Crassus to observe Piso and Cornelia, and that she had told Crassus of Cornelia's visit to Ascletario. And again and again she implored that her grandmother might be heard, who would testify to the innocence of her magic.

"You have compounded philtres—you confess it," said Certus. "A philtre is only a pretty name for a poison. It was doubtless you who procured the poison for the ring."

Theophila was still frantically protesting her innocence, when Domitian ordered her to be taken away.

The examination of the witnesses was continued

till shortly before midnight, when Domitian rose, ordered all the prisoners and witnesses to be kept in close custody, whispered for a few minutes to Regulus —who wrote something down on tablets—and retired, overjoyed to see how black a case could be made out against Piso.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COUNSEL FOR THE CROWN.

The Senate met next day as soon as it was light—specially convened, on account of "Public danger." The Temple of Venus was surrounded by the Praetorians, and the Senators entered through a lane of armed men. Soldiers were posted at all the street-corners. In all the Forums, and by all the Temples, were small bodies of Praetorians drawn up in the form of a wedge—or "pig's head," as the soldiers called it—ready for a rush. Fresh from such significant sights, the dismayed Senators offered the customary frankincense on Venus's altar with a trembling hand, and took their seats, scarce daring to ask one another what had happened?

Presently the Emperor's Quaestor entered, and read a letter from Domitian. The Emperor wrote that he had at last discovered the guilty persons who had so long evaded justice, hinted obscurely at the neglect and carelessness which had made this long evasion of

justice possible, and concluded by saying that he would presently test the sincerity of that devotion to his person which the Senate had so often professed.

While the Senators sat dumfoundered—each man of them wondering if *he* was meant—Veiento sprang up, and exclaimed that this was no time for hesitation, unless the Fathers wished to see the City given up to a new Catiline and Clodius! A man would presently be brought before them, who had veiled his nefarious aims beneath the profoundest hypocrisy—trying to lull his Prince and his country into a false security, the easier to destroy them both! A traitorous counsellor, a perjured general, who had insinuated himself into the Councils of the Prince, that he might corrupt his officers—who had privately circulated seditious books, in which he held up the best of Emperors to odium—who would be proved to have been cognisant of every one of the conspiracies which, during the last years, had shocked the Roman people—who, finally, had lately attempted the life of the Prince, by introducing into the Palace a slave girl who was to poison him by means of a ring—all this and much more would presently be proved! Let the Conscript Fathers, therefore, prepare their minds for a revelation of hypocrisy and depravity such as, in all his experience, he had never yet met with!

Scarcely had Veiento ceased, when Regulus, starting

up, cried out, "I accuse Lucius Calpurnius Piso of *Majestas!*"

At this name, there was not one there who did not grow pale, and feel that his own doom was being pronounced. "He means to destroy the Senate," was the thought of every one. But almost as Regulus uttered his accusation, and before he could follow it up with the furious invective he had prepared, Domitian entered, with the younger Consul (Valens, the elder, a very old man, was ill), the Praetor, and several Praetorian officers, among whom was Clodianus.

The Senate rose; but Domitian hardly acknowledged their salutation.

"Pretty vigilance you exercise, Conscript Fathers!" he said. "I should have been murdered six hundred times over if I had looked to you to warn me!"

He sat down, and began a long, rambling statement of Piso's guilt, on the lines of last night's examination—charging him with having intended to revolt in Britain (but the Senators observed that he avoided uttering Agricola's name); with having been in correspondence while at Baiae with Apollonius and other conspirators in Asia; with treasonable intercourse with Demetrius—"Who, Conscript Fathers, as all of you know, and some of you remember, bolstered up Thrasea in his treason;" with having contrived the

escape of Apollonius; with being privy to the designs of Arulenus and Senecio; with having more lately conspired with Crassus and Flavius Clemens; with consulting astrologers about a lucky hour for the attempt, and about the death of the Emperor; and, finally, with having set on a slave-girl to poison him. Nothing was omitted which could be made to appear suspicious. Even the manumission of Eudoxus yesterday was represented as an attempt to preserve him from the examination by torture. He ended abruptly, exclaiming, "It is enough! Bring in the prisoners, and let us hear the witnesses!"

All eyes were turned to Piso as he entered. "What a man!" whispered one of the Senators to another. "He looks like an Emperor——"

"Hush!" said the other. "Perhaps, if he had looked less like one, he would not be where he is!"

Never had the dignity of Piso's bearing been more strikingly apparent than when he thus entered the Senate to be tried for his life. The simple and manly bearing of Aulus, whose bright young face was pale and haggard, also touched many of the Senators—some of them remembered his father.

The appearance of Crassus was in strong contrast with that of his fellow-prisoners. He had recovered a great portion of his usual self-possession, but there was a restless anxiety in his face, an excitement in

his manner which he could not altogether control. The fulfilment of all his forebodings about the fatal ring had shaken his sceptical contempt for the Gods; and as he entered and saw the image of Venus above her altar, he prostrated himself, and cried, "O Venus, Dionaea Mater, be propitious to me!"

When he was made to sit down on the bench appointed for accused persons, his eyes roamed constantly over the faces of those present—Senators and witnesses—he seemed always trying to read his fate in their eyes. The prisoners wore the new togas in which they had appeared at the marriage feast, having had no opportunity of exchanging them for the old and sordid garments which the Roman sense of decorum considered proper to accused persons. The witnesses had come in immediately after the prisoners —Eudoxus and Tryphosa were now among them. Several of them had undergone the torture, as could be seen by their ghastly looks and tottering steps. Eudoxus, Tryphosa, and Theophila, who had been racked on the "Little Horse," until they were unable to walk, were carried in on chairs. The miserable Theophila, who seemed more dead than alive, fainted when she saw Clodianus, and the carelessness of her bearers let her fall from her chair. The lictors raised her, but she gave no signs of life, and she was ordered to be carried out, and a doctor to be sent for.

Piso was for a moment quite overcome by the sight of Eudoxus and Tryphosa. He groaned, and covered his face.

"Are you about to confess, Lucius Piso?" sneered Veiento. "Under so clement a Prince, a confession may obtain you at least the favour of choosing the manner of your death!"

"I have nothing to confess," said Piso, turning his despairing, yet indignant eyes on Veiento. "I am guiltless of all whereof I stand accused!"

"Here is the examination under torture of the wretched sorceress who has just been carried out," said Veiento, tapping spitefully on some sealed tablets which he held in his hand. "We will see how you will look when you hear it read!"

The evidence of Eudoxus was first heard.

"The accused attempted, Conscript Fathers, to suppress the evidence of this man, by manumitting him yesterday, *inter amicos*," said Regulus. "As you well know, this is a form of manumission which does not give him the full rights of a citizen——"

"I sent his name, three years ago, to be inscribed on the Censor's list at Baiae," said Piso.

"Baiae is a long way off," said Regulus, rudely. "I have reason to believe he never was inscribed. Manumission, *inter amicos*, can only give him the status of a Latin——"

"But that carries with it exemption from torture," said Piso, firmly. "The rights of citizens have been violated by——"

"Ho! ho! who talks of the rights of citizens, when the life of our Lord God has been attempted?" cried Regulus. "Mark, I pray you, Conscript Fathers, the spirit of the accused! This is a case of *majestas*, and even an ingenuous witness may in such a case be examined by torture."

"You had better look to yourself, Lucius Piso," said Certus. "You will require your whole efforts to clear yourself from this accusation. You will not serve your cause by this barefaced attempt to stifle the evidence of your amanuensis."

Eudoxus was then closely questioned about his mission to Athens. Both Piso and Aulus listened for his replies with the keenest anxiety. Eudoxus himself felt that many lives hung on his words. He did not know how much was known; but he saw that at least he could not injure his master by showing that he had then been unfriendly to Crassus.

"I was sent to ascertain whether Aulus Atticus wished, as Publius Crassus had asserted, to break off his contract to marry my master's daughter," he said. "Crassus asked my master for his daughter. My master distrusted him, and did not wish to give her to him, but neither did he wish to offend Crassus, lest

Crassus should injure him with Caesar. My master, therefore, tried to gain time. He neither accepted nor refused—— "

"It is false! He refused!" said Crassus. "However, since the thing has been mentioned, I may say that my secret interviews with Piso, of which witnesses have said so much, were all on the subject of my proposals for the hand of his daughter."

"Do not interrupt the witness," said Regulus.

Eudoxus, continuing, said that, as he set out at the beginning of winter, he was ordered to remain till spring. That afterwards the return of the young men was delayed, and that he believed that this was because Piso, who was much attached to his ward, was afraid to expose him to the enmity of Crassus.

Every instant Aulus expected to hear Crassus denounce him as a Christian. But Crassus dared not. Ever since Theophila had confessed that he paid her to watch Piso, Crassus had observed a change for the worse in the bearing of Domitian towards himself. If he accused Aulus, and Aulus denied, he would be lost. And Aulus *would* deny—he had not been caught at a Christian assembly, he was not worth destroying, and his denial would be accepted, that the guilt of Crassus might appear more heinous. Crassus began to think, indeed, that the only chance for himself was that both Piso and Aulus

should be acquitted. It seemed to him that they must all stand or fall together. So, disregarding Certus's injunctions not to interrupt the witnesses, he went on to protest that he had set Theophila to watch Piso's house only to obtain an interview with Calpurnia. "It was a lover's folly; but not the device of a conspirator."

At present, things looked very black for Crassus. Nothing whatever had been elicited to connect Piso with Chione, and Piso's unwilling judges began to hope he might get off after all.

But there were many witnesses to prove that Crassus had held private conversations with Piso, and Piso with Flavius Clemens—who was now openly spoken of as a traitor. The Chamberlain Parthenius swore to having heard Crassus say something to Piso, one night at a supper, about seizing the Empire. Hylas said the same. Hylas, who had been shown the "Little Horse," but not put upon it, had made some damaging revelations. In his abject terror, he lost his head, and declared that Parthenius, too, had spoken treason at the banquet! Crassus had put a ring on the hand of the statue of Venus in the great triclinium, and had said something about the "Empire of the World."

"I invoked the Goddess of Love!" cried Crassus. "The Gods are my witnesses that I did but say Venus

had the world for her empire, and I entreated her to make me happy in love! I was trying to persuade my cousin to consent——"

"Silence!" cried the usher. "Prisoners must not interrupt the witnesses!"

"Chione had a violent quarrel with her master," continued Hylas. "It was about the ring he gave to Venus. Crassus said it was stolen. He said Chione had got it. And Chione *had* it. I saw her one day looking at it. She hid it in a hole under a tile, in the floor of her room. It was the same ring Chione poisoned herself with."

How did he know that?

Because it was a great emerald, and it was an emerald that was found on Chione after she was dead. Chione was always talking to Clodianus, and that made Crassus angry. Chione's ghost appeared to Crassus the night she died, and showed him the ring. Crassus and he searched for the ring, but they could not find it. And next day Crassus was arrested at the Palace, and Hylas heard that Chione had poisoned herself. Crassus did not want to give up Chione—after he bought her, he never cared for anything else—"or took any notice of *me*," added Hylas, at which Veiento laughed, and a few of the Senators tremblingly guffawed.

As Hylas was pouring out all he knew—with the

terrible "Little Horse," and the dislocated limbs of Eudoxus and Tryphosa ever before his eyes—Domitian wrote something on his tablets, and passed them to Regulus.

"We lose time," said the orator. "The matter of the ring is amply proved. The only doubt is as to the instigator, and that we shall best ascertain by hearing the evidence as to the visits of Cornelia to the sorceress. Lictors! bring in the female prisoners!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE JULIAN LAW.

A THRILL ran through the Senate. Piso half rose from his seat—then sank down again, and sat, burying his face in his hands. There was a moment of awful expectation, during which a lictor entered, and whispered something to Regulus, who rose, and said, "I am sorry to inform you, Conscript Fathers, that the Thessalian sorceress is reported by the physician to be dead. However, I have here her examination, properly attested—nor does the guilt of the criminals depend solely upon her evidence."

As the three women entered—all attired in black robes, and with dishevelled hair—something like a sob seemed to go up from the Senators' benches. Cornelia, her grey locks falling over her shoulders, walked first, and seemed to seek the chief place in that dismal procession. Behind her came Aemilia and Calpurnia. Aemilia, like a person walking in a dream, mechanically obeyed the lictor, as he guided

her to a seat opposite to the male prisoners, and looked round her with a bewildered air, until her eyes fell upon Piso. Then she wildly started from her seat, as if to run to him; but the lictor withheld her. She sank down, wringing her hands—then pressed them on her bosom, which heaved convulsively. Calpurnia, who clung to her mother, was dissolved in tears, and her agonized sobs disturbed Certus as he began his speech.

"When these women leave off crying, I will begin," he said brutally.

"Calpurnia, for my sake, restrain your grief!" said Piso—but those who saw him said afterwards that the anguish expressed in his voice was more terrible than even Calpurnia's heart-rending sobs.

Veiento followed Certus in a scathing tirade, full of the grossest insults to Cornelia; and then Certus continued the examination of the witnesses. He fastened upon the visit of Cornelia to Theophila at Cumae, which he represented as undertaken in order to ascertain the favourable hour for assassinating Domitian. A Centurion of the City Guard at Puteoli, who had been suborned by Crassus to watch the movements of Piso's household, deposed to having seen the carriage drive towards Cumae. He followed up the road, until he came upon the carriage, which had been left in a thicket beside the road. Thinking

this a strange thing, he concealed himself in the bushes. A long while afterwards, he saw Cornelia and Calpurnia, with a servant bearing a lantern, come from the direction of Cumae. He heard them speak of Dama's Villa, and Cornelia said, "Let us make haste, lest our absence should be discovered." The witness then went up to Dama's Villa, and watched near it, till he saw the woman they called Theophila. He had seen her again last night, and recognized her.

Chrysippus, Cornelia's freedman, was next produced. He, too, had been put to the torture, and under it had confessed that while he was left on guard outside Dama's Villa, curiosity had induced him to steal in and listen. He had heard Cornelia and Theophila speak of a person touching whom Cornelia wished to inquire of the spirits—the person's name was not mentioned. Cornelia gave the witch something—Chrysippus could not see what it was—the apartment where they were was very long, and they were at the farther end. He heard the witch begin her incantation; but her voice, the strange perfumes which filled the room, and a smoke which began to arise, so terrified him that he fled.

"Did you not return and hear something else?" asked Regulus. "Don't trifle with the Court——"

"So help me, Jupiter! I heard no more," said

Chrysippus. "And Cornelia, my honoured patroness, told me she was consulting the witch about our young lady's marriage."

"The 'Little Horse' might refresh his memory," remarked Veiento, with a sneer on his ferret-like face —his sharp nose seemed to twist as he spoke.

Cornelia rose, and turned to the Emperor. "There is no need, Caesar, to torture the man again," she said. "If there is any guilt, I take it upon myself. *I* consulted the Thessalian. I wished to know whether Crassus was to be my granddaughter's husband. I went secretly, and during my son's absence from Baiae——"

"He was at Formiae, with the conspirators Arulenus and Mauricus," said Certus, interrupting her.

"Because," continued Cornelia, "my son was always hostile to Mathematici and soothsayers of all sorts, and would have forbidden his daughter to accompany me. He hears now, for the first time, of my dealings with Theophila. If a crime has been committed, I alone have committed it. On me alone, then, let vengeance fall—for I suppose you will not punish this child"—she pointed to Calpurnia—"for obeying her grandmother?" Cornelia had spoken hitherto with astonishing calmness, but now she flushed, and raised her voice, lifting at the same time

her right hand, like one who appeals to Heaven. "I call all the Gods to witness that my son Lucius is innocent!" she cried. "He knew nothing of my visits to Theophila, or to Ascletario. As for the sacrifice at Puteoli, of which so much has been made, it preceded my visit to Theophila, as can easily be proved—for my son was present at it, with Arulenus, and went the next day to Formiae—so that it is impossible I offered a sacrifice in consequence of the answer I obtained from Theophila—that is, in consequence of something which happened several days afterwards! That sacrifice was offered, as every one knew, to expiate an unfavourable omen which occurred, as the slaves have testified, on the 7th of the Kalends, the same night that Publius Crassus visited us on his way to Rome. The doors of the Villa burst open in the middle of the night——"

"Enough, Cornelia," said Certus, brutally. "Do not try to divert our attention from your visit to the sorceress. As your motives were so harmless, you will doubtless be willing to tell us what was her reply. By the too great severity of the torture, and the carelessness of that lictor, who"—here he raised his voice till he almost bellowed—"for aught I know, may have been bribed to destroy a witness out of whom further tortures might have drawn even more damaging confessions——"

Certus glared at the lictors, and the wretched culprit, falling prostrate on the floor, cried—

"May I perish, if I did it on purpose! The cursed witch fell off the chair before I could catch her!"

"Peace, wretch!" said Certus. "Though your stupidity or crime has killed the witness, these tablets remain. By means of them, Cornelia, we shall be able to test the sincerity of your replies."

"I know not what lies the torture may have made her utter," said Cornelia, turning paler; "but, if she spoke the truth, she told you that there was no answer—that the incantation failed. Ask my granddaughter, for she was there."

"Will you invoke the Genius of the Emperor, and swear that you are speaking the truth—that you obtained no answer?" said Regulus, interposing.

"I swear!" said Cornelia. "By the Genius of the Emperor, I swear that Theophila herself confessed the incantation failed! Ask my granddaughter."

Cornelia was livid. Regulus, whose long experience enabled him to judge pretty accurately from a witness's demeanour whether he was telling the truth, was convinced that Cornelia was perjuring herself. He whispered to Veiento. Together they appeared to consult Theophila's deposition, and Regulus affected to point out certain passages.

"For the last time, Cornelia, do you swear that you obtained no answer?" asked Certus.

"I swear it," said Cornelia. "Forgive me, Jove," she prayed, "this unwilling perjury!" Then she grew ashy pale—it had suddenly flashed across her that perhaps Theophila had heard the voices, and had betrayed her. The whole thing might have been concocted with the Jewess!

But Regulus left her, and ordered Calpurnia to stand up. She was closely questioned about the visit to Cumae, but her excessive distress saved her. Regulus could make nothing of her answers, interrupted as they were by uncontrollable weeping and piteous protestations of her father's innocence. At last, in a transport of distress, Calpurnia flung herself on her knees before her father, and implored him to forgive her. There was a painful scene—Piso rushing to embrace his daughter, the lictors interposing. Domitian, dreading the effect, ordered Calpurnia to be removed.

Aemilia was then questioned as to her visit to Ascletario with Cornelia.

"Lucius Piso is happy in the obedience of his family," sneered Veiento. "We shall prove to you, Conscript Fathers, that the female members of his family were in constant communication with some of these impostors, and it will be for you to decide whether they visited them, believing in their magical pretensions, or because the Mathematici have ever

been the go-betweens in every sort of crime. What meeting-place so safe as the house of an astrologer? You are surprised there with a suspected person—you only come to have your warts charmed! What more specious!"

So strong was the feeling against a wife who betrayed her husband, that even Domitian did not venture to let them press Aemilia very hard.

Regulus tried to get her to admit that Piso had spoken against Domitian; but she said, with a dignity as lofty as Cornelia's—

"If he had, it would not be becoming for his wife to repeat it. Ask what you will of what I have myself done. I appeal to the Julian law."

By the Julian law, no one could be compelled to bear witness against a relation, or even a dear friend.

"Did your husband tell you to say that?" sneered Regulus.

"No," replied Aemilia. "I have heard my uncle speak of the law."

"Your uncle Arulenus, I suppose," said Regulus. "You are, however, unable to deny that your husband has reviled Caesar. Call the next witness."

This was the physician who had seen the dead body of Chione. He testified to the virulence of the poison and the ease with which it could have been introduced between the lips of a sleeping man.

"Enough, enough!" cried Regulus. "Do not teach us how to murder!"

Then witnesses were called to prove that Piso had worn mourning for Arulenus, and that he had been heard to praise Thrasea. But the only facts which gave any reasonable colour to the charge against him were his having sent Eudoxus to Athens to forbid his son's return, and some visits of Cornelia to Ascletario, made from Aricia, which now first came out.

Crassus had hitherto been scarcely mentioned—or only as Piso's dupe. But now Regulus was attacking Crassus in good earnest—dilating on the extravagance of his life—his overwhelming debts—his attempts to borrow large sums of money—his repeated visits to Tuscany—ostensibly to superintend the building of his Villa, but really to meet Demetrius the Cynic. "An Epicurean, Conscript Fathers—it *is* said, a blasphemer of the Gods, and a profaner of the sacred mysteries—another Clodius! An Epicurean, I say, a soft lover of pleasure, who cannot move without a train of singing-women—a man whose exquisite taste Caesar himself has deigned to consult—such a man as this, I say, travels a thousand stadia to visit a filthy Cynic, who goes about in a lousy cloak, to show us how great a philosopher he is! Publius Crassus, I say, goes a thousand stadia to converse with Demetrius the Cynic. For what purpose? To discuss the *summum bonum*,

or the Origin of Things, perhaps? *Credat Judaeus Apella!*" Then, suddenly turning to Crassus, he said, "I challenge you, Publius Crassus, to swear by Caesar's Genius, that you have never talked about the death of our most excellent Prince!"

"I swear it!" cried Crassus, eagerly. "My servants are in a conspiracy against me! This little viper, Hylas, is trying to ruin me, out of jealousy of the girl who stole my ring. I can prove I lost it months—many months—before her death, and that I inquired of every pawnbroker in Rome——"

"That is not now the question, Crassus," said Regulus. "We went into all that two hours ago. We are now inquiring about the conversations you have had with Piso, in which you proposed the murder of Caesar. I have witnesses to prove it." Whenever Regulus said, "I have witnesses to prove it," Crassus turned livid. "Will you deny these conversations? Or will you say that it was Piso, and not you, who made these proposals? Come, Crassus! What is a false oath or two to a man who has profaned the statues of the Gods? Oh, we know all about that impious orgie of yours, on the night when, as you pretend, you were robbed of the poisoned ring. You blasphemed Venus—there she stands—this is her Temple. Lay your hand on her altar, and swear that Piso has never made these proposals to you!"

Whether this scene had been arranged beforehand, to make Crassus appear to have no choice but to speak, or whether Regulus's threats to produce fresh witnesses terrified Crassus, or whether he had from the first been intending to betray Piso, and had only waited for the best moment at which to do it, he recoiled, as though with horror, clapped his hands to his head, then looked at Piso, groaned, and at last said, in broken accents—

"Alas! Regulus, do you ask me to accuse my kinsman? I, too, claim exemption under the Julian law!"

He sat down, as though overpowered by emotion. Piso, by whom he sat, withdrew as far from him as possible, and even wrapped his robe more closely round him, lest it should touch Crassus.

"I perceive, Piso," said Regulus—while the Senate sat confounded at this incredible baseness — even though they had been expecting it. "I perceive that you wish us to think you esteem Crassus unworthy to touch your garment. But, speak! Deny what Crassus has said!"

"I deny!" said Piso, in a deep stern voice. "By my faith and honour."

"Perhaps," continued Regulus, "you will also tell us that it was not yourself, but Crassus, who proposed Caesar's assassination?"

Piso looked round upon them all—last, on Crassus. "Though he is the basest of mankind," he said, "he is accused with me. I will not accuse him. I am content to say that I myself am innocent."

A murmur of applause broke from the Senate—instantly suppressed. But Domitian turned upon them in fury.

"What, Conscript Fathers! Do you applaud my murderers?" he cried.

"Not so, Caesar," said Regulus. "They do but approve of a criminal refusing to add to his guilt by accusing his fellow-criminal. That this is their meaning will appear presently, when the ballot-urn is carried round."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE OATH OF JOVE.

Before judgment was given, lest the sight of the prisoners should too much affect the Senators, Domitian ordered them to be removed; but, as the lictors were preparing to obey, Cornelia rose, and asked permission to speak. Hoping that she might be going to reveal something, Domitian assented, saying in the usual form—

"Conscript Fathers, if it seems good to you, shall we hear the accused?"

"It is I," began Cornelia—she stood in the midst of the floor, fronting Domitian, and her voice rose high with the vehemence of her speech—"It is I," she repeated, "unhappy that I am, who have brought my son into this peril! It is I who consulted the astrologers, unknown to him. It is I who forced my daughter-in-law and my granddaughter to accompany me to these men. It is I who prevailed upon my son to detain my grandson in Greece. I did it, because

I desired a great marriage for my granddaughter. I secretly favoured the suit of Crassus. Yes! I confess it! And from this my folly have arisen all these secret dealings which have brought suspicion on my son. Crassus has endeavoured, by the most artful hypocrisy, to fix his own guilt on Piso! Yes! I will say it!" For Piso, whom these words of his mother's had completely confounded, was attempting to check her. Some even declared that he said, "Do not, by a baseness, seek to save me!"

"I will speak!" continued Cornelia, who was now entirely beside herself. Her eyes flashed fire, her grey hair fluttering with her passion, gave her the aspect of a prophetess uttering the reply of the God. Even Domitian quailed before her, and could not utter the order to silence her. "Crassus," continued Cornelia, a little more calmly, "would have drawn my son into certain schemes of his. I know not what they were, for my son refused to hear them, and from that moment pressed on the marriage of his daughter with his ward, which I, alas! not knowing his reasons, opposed. Let that marriage speak for Piso! If he had been ambitious, would he have selected a young man of no fortune, with no interest at Court, with nothing to recommend him to an ambitious father? It is I who am the cause of all—I who was ambitious, I who inquired of the Mathematici—on me, therefore,

let the punishment fall! My son listened neither to me, nor yet to Crassus! See, I confess my guilt! I confess that I sought to influence my son to join Crassus in his designs! But he would not hear me. He refused so much as to know what were the designs of Crassus. He is innocent! By the Great Gods of Rome, by Jove, Maintainer and Avenger of Oaths, by the Images of my Ancestors, he is innocent! Behold, Caesar, I, daughter of the Great Africanus, prostrate myself before thee, imploring thee to punish me only!"

She spoke with indescribable intensity of passion, and, falling on her knees, bowed herself in the attitude of a suppliant. Piso was with difficulty restrained by the lictors from rushing to his mother. Crassus, his lips twitching convulsively, was exclaiming that Cornelia was mad—that grief had turned her brain. Aulus rent his clothes. Aemilia—who, as a woman, was less closely guarded—had thrown herself upon Cornelia, who had fallen forward on her face. By a common impulse, the Senators had risen to their feet—then, fearing lest Domitian should order them to be massacred by the Praetorians, on the pretext that they were attempting a rescue, they sat down again in disorder and consternation.

Domitian had seen their motion with terror. It recalled him to self-possession.

"Remove the prisoners instantly!" he thundered, stamping his foot.

A file of Practorians, who had been stationed in the portico, and had heard the confused tumult, immediately appeared on each side of the curtain, and the terrified Senators believed their hour was come. But Domitian merely repeated his order, and the prisoners were removed—Aemilia supporting Cornelia's head, as the lictors carried her, and exclaiming that she was dead. Cornelia's face had a strange purple flush, her eyes were wide open, and there was foam on her lips.

This ghastly spectacle produced a terrible effect on the Senators, whose nerves were already much strained by personal fears. They, more sincerely than Crassus, believed that she had gone mad with the horror of the situation, and as soon as she began to accuse Crassus, every man there trembled to think of whom she might name next. Many a one there had, in the recesses of his own home, uttered words which, if repeated, would send him to stand beside Piso and Crassus.

Domitian, more relentless than ever because of that instant's fright, addressed the Senate, as was his custom, before the votes were taken.

"You have heard the evidence, Conscript Fathers," he began, in a gentle voice—he leant forward, with his hands on the lions' heads of his ivory chair, and spoke

seated. "You have also heard the accused incriminating each other, while excusing themselves. You have also heard the confession of Piso's mother that she has conspired with Publius Crassus. Ill is it for the State, Conscript Fathers, when women, forgetting the softness of their sex, meddle with conspiracy! She has asserted her son's innocence—magnifying her own guilt, in order to lessen his. With what compassion, Conscript Fathers, did we not hear her! And how gladly, did our duty to the State permit, would we not allow her to expiate her fault by her confession!"

He paused, and the Senators, who knew what the gentleness of this exordium foreboded heard him trembling.

"But *can* we—but *may* we allow this, Conscript Fathers?" he continued, contracting his bleared eyes, the better to read their faces. "May we pass over such a crime as this, because, forsooth, a woman commits it? Does not this rather prove how much a just severity is needed? If women embark in these crimes as men, shall they not be punished as men?"

"He takes Piso's condemnation as too certain to require argument," whispered one Senator to another—they sat at the end of the bench farthest from Domitian.

"Supposing even," he went on, as if expostulating with them, "that your devotion to me—so often expressed—permitted you to acquit her. Supposing that I could prevail with you to forget that it is your Prince, and to consider only that a plot has been formed against a citizen—ought you then, think you, to acquit Cornelia? But you cannot look on the matter thus, or consider that this is a plot against the life of one man. Into what calamities would not the State have been plunged had these wretches succeeded! Have you so soon forgotten the miseries of the Vitellian War—which I put an end to? Do you wish to see new armies contending in the Roman Forum, and the statues of the Capitol a second time cast down on the heads of the besiegers? If you wish all this, Conscript Fathers, you have only to throw a sufficient number of *A's* into the urn!"

At this point in his speech, an usher entered, who whispered to Regulus. Regulus sprang up, and addressing the Emperor, said—

"The Gods, Caesar, whom Cornelia invoked but now in attestation of Piso's innocence, have pronounced judgment—Cornelia is dead!"

At this announcement, a superstitious horror fell upon the Senate. They had seen Cornelia fall, with the words of asseveration still upon her lips. Jove, Avenger of Oaths, had then heard—and avenged!

Domitian was not slow to use the deadly weapon thus put into his hand.

"You hear, Conscript Fathers," he said, "what has happened. Can we doubt that this miserable woman swore falsely, and that the vengeance of the Gods has fallen upon her? She called them to witness that Crassus was guilty, but Piso innocent. Crassus called them to witness that *he* was innocent, but Piso guilty. Cornelia is dead. The Gods still suffer Crassus to live." Domitian paused to give this its due effect. "So much for Crassus," he continued presently. "As for this young man, Aulus Atticus, your justice and clemency will be equally shown in acquitting him. He does not appear to have been privy to Piso's designs. For Piso"—here the tyrant's smothered ferocity at last broke out, and in a voice which grew in fury at every word, he recapitulated the long list of charges. "He conspired in Britain. He was in correspondence with Lucullus. He was cognisant of the designs of Arulenus. He was writing a seditious History—a pretended History—in which, under a veil, he attacked his Prince. At Baiae, he corresponded with Apollonius of Tyana, by means of Demetrius. He seduced Publius Crassus from his loyalty. He was even now engaged, *with others whom I could name, but the time is not yet come,* in a plot to murder me at Stella's Shows. He has suborned

the Mathematici to spread abroad reports of a day fatal to me—a day which *he* meant to make fatal! Let the votes be taken!"

The accensi then went round, and gave to each Senator three tablets, on which were written respectively, the letters, A, C, and NL. Then the urn was carried to each, that he might drop in the tablet he chose.

The Senators, who, when they were asked if Piso was guilty, dropped in the fatal C, felt themselves degraded indeed—such of them as were not the creatures of Domitian—but doubtless excused themselves from being guilty of Piso's blood, on the score that, had they refused, Domitian would have called in his Praetorians, and massacred them all then and there, and Piso with them. With hang-dog looks they dropped in their tablets, and as they did so, the Genius of Rome turned weeping away.

When the votes were examined by the Praetor, Aulus Atticus was found to be acquitted. Piso had an overwhelming majority of the fatal C's—*Condemno;* but a few had ventured to drop in the doubtful NL —*Non liquet.* Crassus's judgment was expressed entirely by this "Not proven"—so well had the Senate understood the summing-up of Domitian.

It only remained to pronounce sentence. Crassus, neither condemned nor acquitted, was reserved for further evidence, or the Emperor's decision.

"As for Lucius Piso, Conscript Fathers," said Domitian, "permit me to prevail upon you to grant him—out of your affection for me, and forgetting the heinousness of his crimes—the favour of dying in the manner he may choose. Thus your eyes will be spared the pain of beholding his execution, and every one will know that I was present in the Senate."

Calpurnia had been removed to a small chamber at the back of Venus's shrine. Here, roughly but kindly tended by the wife of a temple-sweeper, she slowly came to herself.

"There, there, my pretty lamb!" said the woman, when Calpurnia began to weep. "Don't take on so. Is that fine young man your husband? Dear, dear! Well, perhaps they'll let him off. They all say that Crassus is most to blame. No one likes *him*. Ah! there's been a many trials lately! I saw your uncle Arulenus go to be tried—and there was Fannia—she was up for Arulenus's affair, but they only banished *her*. Perhaps they'll only banish your husband. And your father, too! Dear, dear!"

The good woman was still trying to console Calpurnia, when the tramp of the lictors announced that the prisoners were being brought in. Calpurnia sprang to meet her father, but the first object she saw was her grandmother's body, carried by four lictors, with Aemilia supporting her head.

They laid Cornelia on one of the benches, and the doctor, who had already been sent for to Theophila, from his shop in the Forum, was fetched again. He felt the heart, called for a mirror and for a feather, and holding these to the lips, presently pronounced that life had departed.

The solemn presence of death struck most of the beholders with awe. The lictors withdrew. Only Crassus, whom the sight of death at other times terrified and disgusted, now, tortured by humiliation and fear, took refuge in a kind of desperation, and appeared perfectly unmoved.

The body of Cornelia lay for a few moments on the bench—then a lictor entering, said respectfully that a litter was outside, and that if Piso permitted, the body could be carried home. Piso and Aulus placed the body in the litter—which was brought into the corridor—and Piso, kissing the pale brow, said, "If I see thee no more, farewell. I follow thee."

Then the litter was taken up by the bearers, the lictors closed the door, and left the unhappy prisoners to the sad consolation of a few last moments together.

In the small waiting-room, the little band of prisoners were huddled together, in spite of themselves; but by common consent, they all ignored the presence of Crassus. He sat at the farthest end of the bench, his arms tightly folded across his breast,

his face turned away. Since he uttered those base words, Piso had never looked at him. Piso and Aemilia stood locked in each other's arms. Calpurnia, drowned in tears, embraced her father's knees, and Aulus, sitting at the other end of the bench, had given himself up to grief.

After some time, they involuntarily began to listen for footsteps—and several times they thought they heard them, but it was only the soldiers shuffling their feet outside.

At last the lictors threw open the door, and the Praetor entered. The prisoners knew that they were condemned—for he had laid aside the praetexta, and appeared clad only in his tunic.

"Lucius Piso," he said, "the Senate has found you guilty of treason against our Lord God, the Emperor Caesar Domitian Augustus Germanicus (whom the Gods preserve!), and has condemned you to death. At the prayer of Caesar himself, the Senate accords you the favour of dying in the manner you may choose. Aulus Atticus, you are acquitted. Publius Calpurnius Crassus, your case not appearing clear to the Senate, is deferred. You will be removed to my house, in free custody. Aemilia and Calpurnia are interdicted fire and water, and banished to the Islands. Lucius Piso, the Quaestor will attend upon you. Lictors! some of you conduct Publius Crassus to my

house. There is a guard without. The rest of you will conduct Piso and his family to their own house."

Crassus was immediately taken out. As he passed, Piso turned his back upon him.

Aemilia, her face hidden on Piso's breast, clasped him convulsively, with wild sobs and tears, which she could not restrain. Only Piso preserved his calmness.

Caius and Julius, refused admission, had been waiting in the crowd outside, in the most agonizing suspense. Once a temple-sweeper came running out to say that one of the ladies was taken in a fit. Meanwhile, the populace—when tired of discussing the characters and prospects of the prisoners, and contradicting each other as to whether Calpurnia had boiled a toad in viper's blood, or the heart of a hyaena, in order to find out if her father would be Emperor—talked of the Shows, hoped it would not thunder to-morrow, and expressed their regrets that this time there were no Christians for the beasts.

"They say Glabrio has been put to death for being a Christian," said a greengrocer from the Suburra. "Domitian might have saved him for the Show, and made him fight another lion! It's my opinion Domitian don't take as much pains to please *us* as he used to—he's all for the Praetorians now—a set of hulking, lazy fellows, who eat us up! He'd better look out——"

"Hold your tongue, do, Balbus!" said his wife, nudging him. "Don't talk so in a crowd, pray, with Rufus the scavenger listening to you! Don't you see him there—trying to sneak up nearer? He bears us a grudge about our refuse, and as like as not he'll tell the Quaestor of you—— Here they come! Bother! those great ugly Praetorians are standing so close round, we shan't see 'em at all! Are they all condemned? Only Piso? Serve him right! I always hated your stuck-up ones! They do say he said, if ever he came to be Emperor, he'd put down the Shows. Down with Piso! Down with Piso! Balbus, shout 'Down with Piso!' directly! There's Rufus watching you!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

ACTA VITA.

When Piso reached his house, he found that the body of Cornelia had already been carried to her own chamber.

"Shall we go, Aemilia?" said Piso, taking her hand. "I would see how death looks."

Cornelia lay upon the couch. The libitinarii had not yet washed and anointed her for her burial, but some of the servants had laid a rich mantle over her disarranged dress, and had closed her eyes and composed her limbs. The red flush had not even yet quite faded—it was as though she blushed even in death for that last abasement.

Piso fell on his knees, and kissed the cold hands and the stern countenance—still strong in death. He was yet kneeling there when they came to tell him that the Quaestor had arrived. Piso went to him in the atrium.

"You know my errand, Piso," said the Quaestor.

"I wish it had fallen to some other. You are aware that the manner of your death is left to your own choice. Caesar obtained that indulgence from the Senate." The Quaestor blushed as he said it.

"I thank him," said Piso, gravely.

"And what death do you choose?" asked the Quaestor.

"I have chosen the easiest," replied Piso. "Have you a physician here, or shall I send for one?"

"I brought one with me—he is waiting in the ostium," said the Quaestor. He hesitated, as if ashamed of his errand, and then said, "I am but the mouthpiece. Painful as is my duty, I am ordered to remind you that—in short, time somewhat presses——"

"I understand you," said Piso, with a touch of scorn. "A few hours, I suppose, will be conceded—to make my will and settle my affairs."

"I should strongly advise you," said the Quaestor, "to make Caesar your co-heir."

"Truly, why should I not, since Agricola did so?" said Piso, in a strange tone.

"I should strongly advise it," said the Quaestor. "You will thus enlist the Emperor's clemency for your family. And, with your great wealth, there will still be ample——"

"Enough," said Piso, who commanded himself

with difficulty, lest, if he broke out into the scorn he felt, he might draw down Domitian's wrath on Aemilia and Calpurnia after his death. For the Quaestor, for all the compassion he expressed, would not fail to repeat all he said—and perhaps to make it a little stronger, lest he should be suspected of softening it down from sympathy with the criminal.

"And now how much time can you accord me?" asked Piso.

The Quaestor looked uneasy. "Would three hours—— I protest, Piso, it is by no wish of mine I am sent on this errand——"

"I know it," said Piso. "Believe me, I am sorry for you, and will make your ungrateful task as little troublesome as possible." He smiled rather bitterly as he said it. "Three hours, then," he said. "I will endeavour to be ready. Must you remain here, or will you be shown into a private apartment?"

"I will, if you please, Piso, remain here," said the Quaestor. "You will send for me when you are ready."

As Piso returned to the library, where he had left his family, one of the female slaves came up, and asked him whether the libitinarii should not be sent for, to do the necessary offices for Cornelia.

"Send for them, Nadia," he replied; "but order them to come late in the evening—say, about the

second hour of the night. They can then prepare my body at the same time, and spare us meanwhile the disturbance of their presence."

Nadia burst into tears, flung herself on the ground, and embraced his knees.

"Do not weep for me, Nadia," he said. "Weep rather for those who must still bear all the evils of life—for me, I have almost done with them."

Then, as Nadia went away, weeping and beating her breast, he said to Aulus, who had come out into the corridor—

"How persistently do we regard death as an evil!"

"Ah, my dearest father!" said Aulus, "would that even now you would take hold on that hope of which we have so often spoken!"

"The hour of death is not the time for a man to embrace a new opinion," replied Piso. "I must die as I have lived."

Then he went into the library. Aemilia and Calpurnia ran to him, and hung upon him, with tears and kisses, and Aemilia whispered, "Let me die with you!"

"No, Aemilia, I forbid it," he said. "Do you forget our children?"

"Alas! no," she said. "It would be well if we all died together!" She spoke wildly—Piso feared she might lay hands on herself. "Oh, I now understand

why Medea slew her children!" she cried, tearing her hair. Then, lifting her hand, she called down the vengeance of the Gods upon Domitian. Aulus had fallen upon his knees, and was praying silently. Caius and Julius sat weeping a little apart.

"If you love me," said Piso to them all, "you will restrain this grief. In the order of nature, I must have died before you. Why, then, such lamentations? Did not the ancients say that the Gods showed their love to a man by letting him die young? You lament that I am cut off before my strength has decayed and my eyes have grown dim—before, in short, I have survived myself. It would be more reasonable to lament if I had remained alive, to see myself brought to that condition. And now, since the time is short, give me tablets, that I may make my will."

While Piso wrote, the others sat and watched him as though they would devour him with their eyes. A servant brought in wine and dried grapes, and asked in a scared voice whether supper was to be served?

"Carry something to the Quaestor and his attendants," said Piso. "I will take nothing—it would only prolong what had better be over as quickly as possible. I leave it to Crassus to imitate the death of Petronius."

But he compelled the others to drink a little wine.

"Aemilia," he said presently, "I shall set free all our slaves—or, should objection be made to the number, as many as the law allows, specifying by name those who are to be preferred. What many have done from ostentation, I may surely do out of goodwill. You cannot take them into exile with you. Do you agree to this?"

"Surely," replied Aemilia. "No doubt a few of them will follow us of their free will. Tryphosa and Eudoxus will do so. And if not, it will be no matter—since all things will have become indifferent to us."

"Nay, Aemilia—Time, the Devourer, is also the Renewer of Things. So—'I desire my heirs to manumit all my slaves, and especially those whose names follow.'"

There was a long silence, during which Piso wrote down a hundred names—the number to which by law he was restricted—sometimes asking to be reminded of any whom he might have forgotten.

"There is old Marulla," he said. "Three months ago she was still alive. Eudoxus has been freed thrice over. And now, Aemilia, I must speak of a matter which is very repugnant to me. You are aware that Agricola named Domitian his co-heir. The Quaestor just now urged upon me that I should do the same."

"If it is on my account, I beseech you not to do it," said Aemilia.

His children also entreated him not thus to consent, as it were, to his own condemnation.

"What would your teachers bid you do in such a case, Aulus?" he asked, smiling.

"They would say that in making Domitian your co-heir, you were making yourself partaker in his robbery," replied Aulus.

"Then I will follow the example of Lucius Vetus," said Piso, "who refused to bribe Nero, under the like circumstances. I suppose," he observed, when he had written for some time, "that your teachers would also condemn me for executing sentence on myself?"

"I must admit that it is so, my dear father," said Aulus, reluctantly. "They would say that while you should submit, for the Lord's sake, to suffer wrongfully, you may not yourself assist in inflicting that wrong."

"And perish by the hands of a lictor, in a common prison?" asked Piso, indignantly. "You may ask this of a slave, but you will never obtain it of a Roman! Your sect shows that it took its origin from the dregs of mankind, by its persistent refusal to acknowledge the sentiments of honour and dignity, so dear to freeborn men!"

"Do not be angry, dear father," said Aulus, "but are you not in this instance taking the shadow for the substance? You are, it is true, avoiding a certain indignity—but you are, at the same time, it seems to me, sparing Domitian the much greater indignity of commanding the lictor to put you to death. But, alas! what do we dispute of?" Then Aulus embraced him, with tears, saying, "Would that I might die for you, O my father!"

Presently, Piso went out to ask the Quaestor whether he would be permitted to send a message to some of his friends to come and witness his will?

"Doubtless, Piso. I have no orders to the contrary," replied the Quaestor.

By the time Messala and his other friends had arrived, Piso had finished writing his will—which he did entirely with his own hand. As each came in, Piso embraced him affectionately, thanked him for standing by him in this his last necessity, and resumed his writing.

"At last I have done," he said, laying down his pen.

In order to give his will the utmost validity, Piso had drawn it up in that form in which, by a nominal sale, the testator made over his property to a friend, who was afterwards to distribute it in accordance with the instructions of the will. Piso had named

Messala as this friend. A libripens, with his balance, and a public attestor, who had been sent for, were called in, and Piso handed the will to Messala, who, taking it from him, said—

"These things I say are mine, by the law of the Quirites, and they are bought by me with this money and a pound of brass."

Then Messala struck the balance with a sestertius, and gave it to Piso, and Piso, taking the tablets again from Messala, said—

"These things I give, bequeath, and witness, as they are written on these tablets; and thus do ye, Quirites, bear witness."

Then he touched the ears of the five witnesses, who thereupon subscribed the will, and sealed it with their seals. The tablets were then tied with thread, and sealed. Piso gave the will to Messala for safe keeping, and dismissed the functionaries, with their customary fees. He next called in his servants, a few at a time, and gave them all the ready-money he had left, after providing for the immediate wants of his family and for the funeral expenses.

"And now," he said, "since there yet remains an hour of the time which the Quaestor promised me, let us dismiss sordid cares from our minds, and say such things to each other as it may hereafter console the survivors to remember."

And, turning to Messala with a smile, he quoted the words which his friend Silius Italicus puts into the mouth of Aemilius Paullus at Cannae—

> "Amplius acta
> Quid superest vita, nisi caecae ostendere plebi
> Paullum scire mori?"

CHAPTER XXX.

SALVA RES EST!

During that last hour, Piso spoke of many things, but especially of the wisdom of accustoming ourselves to think of death as a thing inevitable and universal, and on this account, if on no other, not to be considered an evil.

"And surely," he said, "to those unjustly condemned, death cannot be called an evil. For they are thereby delivered from the sight of the unjust acts committed upon others. And if there are Gods who regard the actions of men—and if there *be* Gods, I think that they do regard them, since there is nothing so great as justice, or so worthy to be attended to by the Gods—then, it must surely be a piece of good fortune to depart from these unjust tribunals of unjust Rulers to the just tribunal of Minos and the other Judges. And, for my part, I cannot understand our invincible repugnance to death, unless it be a state unpleasing to the Gods, and to endure but for a short time."

"This is a new idea, Piso," said Messala. "It is, however, certainly true, that, much as we may reason and school ourselves, we never do wholly overcome our enmity to it—if I may call it so. And although you have proved to us that we ought not to weep for you, but rather to rejoice, because you are delivered from the manifold ills of life, yet we find ourselves unable to rejoice, but are on the contrary immeasurably afflicted."

"It is certain," said Piso, "that death appears a greater evil to those who are to live than to those who are to die. And now, since, when the time comes, the Quaestor will be present, and we shall not be able to speak freely, I will narrate to you a dream which I had the night before last, to which I cannot help now attributing some importance. I have already told it to Aulus Atticus."

Piso then told them how he had dreamed of seeing that great procession of persons, all of whom had been put to death unjustly, by the orders of tyrants.

"I could not remember when I awoke what it was that Flavius Clemens said to me," he said, when he had described this dream; "but this morning, at the instant of the Praetor's entering to announce the sentences, the words suddenly flashed into my memory. He said, '*All is well.*'"

"Oh, father!" cried Calpurnia, "is there hope of Domitian relenting?"

"No, my little girl," he said. "His lion may relent, but not he."

Piso then gave some directions about the funeral, desiring that he and his mother should be burnt on one pile. He also enjoined the utmost privacy—that the funeral should take place in the night, and that everything should be avoided which could provoke Domitian.

"So true is what you say, Messala," he observed, smiling, "about our persistent repugnance to death, that I am at this very moment urging you not to invite it."

At last, when the time had expired, he said, "Shall we send and tell the Quaestor I am ready?"

But here they all broke out into passionate lamentations, throwing themselves upon him with sobs and tears, and giving way to the most violent grief, so that he himself was overcome, and wept with them.

While they were thus weeping and lamenting, the Quaestor sent to say that he dared not permit any longer delay.

Piso vainly tried to calm them. "Force me not to leave you in this state," he said, with anguish. "Your tears are the bitterness of death to me!"

He suffered none but Aulus and Messala to accompany him to the bath-room.

"You can greatly add to your pains and my own," he said, "but you cannot assuage them. Aulus shall come—I know that death has for him as few terrors as it has for me. And I will ask this last kindness of Messala—though, indeed, I perhaps lay too much upon him."

"I will go with you, Piso, since you desire it," said Messala, weeping, "that I may treasure up your last words for your children."

"Come, then, it is high time," said Piso. "Let them not say I tried to spin out my life." Then, pointing to his wife and daughter, who were in extremity of grief, he said, "For my part, I have endeavoured this long while to prepare them for this hour."

He first bade farewell to those of his friends who were not to accompany him. Then he embraced his children, beginning with Julius, and to each he said a few words, bidding them remember him, and do nothing unworthy of their ancestors. Last of all, he embraced Aemilia, who fainted in his arms. He carried her to a couch, laid her down, and kissed her once more. Then turning to Messala and Aulus—

"Quick!" he said. "Let us go, before she comes to herself."

So he passed out into the atrium, where the

Quaestor awaited him, accompanied by a little old man of wizened aspect, dressed like a physician.

"You will, I trust, excuse me, Piso," said the Quaestor—who evidently had no relish for the business he was come on—"but my orders were peremptory, and I have already disobeyed them."

"Let us hasten, then," replied Piso. "And I will endeavour to make up for my delay beforehand by not being very long a-dying."

As he passed the ancestral images, he said to Messala, "At least, I have not dishonoured them." And, as he approached the bath-room, turning to the physician, he said, "You, I believe, have come to assist me to die?"

"It is an inauspicious errand, Sir"—said the physician.

"Nay, do not say so," replied Piso. "I go very willingly."

"You shall die, Sir, as easily as possible. You shall scarcely know it. I have helped many," said the physician. "'Tis really a very easy way, if you have a person to help you, who, like me, understands his business."

"Then," said Piso, bantering him, "will you promise me to unlock the door so softly that my life shall steal out before I am aware, like a thief escaping with his booty?"

"As near as possible, it shall be so, Piso," returned the physician; "but we must have plenty of hot water in the bath."

As soon as they entered the bath-room, the Quaestor said to Piso, "I am compelled by my office to be present; but I will retire to the farther end of the room, so as to intrude upon you as little as possible."

The bath had already been made hot. Piso embraced Messala and Aulus, and laid aside the mourning garment which he had worn at his trial. Then he desired the physician to show him the lancet, and when he saw it, "How small a thing," he said, "suffices! This little piece of iron, which I could snap with one of my fingers, will be as effectual as a gladiator's sword!"

"But very much less painful," observed the physician.

"Aulus," said Piso, "commend me, I pray you, to the Best and Greatest."

"I commend you," cried Aulus, falling on his knees, "to the Omnipotent Father!"

Piso, as he stepped into the bath, said, "*Haec recte vertat.*"

Messala and Aulus turned away their eyes while the physician opened Piso's veins.

"You said truly," said Piso. "It is but a prick. With how little pain a man can die!"

He continued to speak to them, commenting with the utmost calmness on his own sensations, until faintness seized him. Then, aware that this would prolong his sufferings, by arresting the flow of blood, he desired the physician to open the veins of his legs, saying, with a smile—

"I trust I shall not be as long in dying as Seneca was."

After this, he fainted again, and the Physician called for the bath to be made hotter.

"A strong man," he said, looking with admiration at Piso's powerful frame. "See the muscles of this arm! He will last some time yet, I fear. Your high-livers are the soonest exhausted."

They revived him with pungent essences.

"Ah," he said, as he came to himself, "must I die again?"

He complained of thirst, and some posca was given to him.

"A soldier's drink!" he said. "To the memory of Agricola!"

He spoke much of Agricola after this, until faintness again overcame him.

Being once more brought to, he thanked his friends for accompanying him thus far on his journey, and whispered to Messala that he had given Aulus the honorarium for the physician. Then, for the first time, he spoke of Crassus.

"If you ever see him again," he said to Messala, "tell him that I am now convinced that ease after pain is better than ease." Then, in a musing tone he added, "After all, he did me very little hurt."

Then he called the Quaestor, and said to him, "You may tell Domitian that I do not envy him."

The water in the bath appearing to be all blood, he sprinkled some of it upon the floor, and said—

"Let us make a libation to Jupiter the Deliverer, or whatever Power presides over the destinies of men!"

A little before the end, he beckoned to Aulus, and said—

"Tell Aemilia that her uncle Arulenus was right—Lucretius fails me here, and I return to Socrates and Plato, with whom I hope soon to be talking, if what they thought be true."

A sudden change came over him. He feebly pressed the hands of Messala and Aulus, and bade them commend him to Aemilia and his children. He closed his eyes, and they stood watching him as every breath came fainter and fainter. They thought he had expired, when he opened his eyes once more, and said, quoting the words of Clemens in his dream, "Salva res est!"

* * * * * *

"It is all over," said the physician, some time

after this. "A strong man—he has been long in dying. Some of them go very soon. For my part, I doubt its being so very easy a death. In my own case, I should choose hemlock."

"It is a very disagreeable business," said the Quaestor, "and I don't mind saying that I have lately had a little too much of it. I will now, gentlemen, relieve you of the inconvenience of my presence."

As the Quaestor went to the Palace to report that Piso was dead, he met many parties of citizens already on their way to the Circus, and next morning two hundred thousand persons applauded the pomp and the chariot races which inaugurated the twelve days' show of the Great Roman Games. There sat Stella, oiled and perfumed "with the price of ten girls upon his fingers," and Regulus among the Senators—who however, sat uneasily on their seats, and asked one another in whispers whether anything was yet known of the manner of Piso's death. Clodianus was there —he, too, a little uneasy, because he fancied that he had not been selected for particular missions quite so often of late. Parthenius was determined to wait for the lucky day. Clodianus would have struck at once. "A resolution once taken, every moment of delay opens another breach to the enemy," he had said to Parthenius that morning, and Parthenius had replied—

"That is all very well, if we only wanted to kill *him*; but we want to know who shall come in his place." The death of Epaphroditus had disagreeably impressed Parthenius. "If the Caesars are going to avenge each other in this way," he said, "we shall never be safe."

Meanwhile Domitian, as he watched the colours fly past in the arena, counted the hours till his destined day. When the Quaestor had told him that Piso was dead, he had exclaimed, "By the favour of Pallas, I am safe at last!" But that sense of security was fading already. Nothing but the passing of the fatal day could give him any lasting relief. And all was not yet done. Piso was despatched; but there were a whole host of conspirators still left. Norbanus, Clodianus, Parthenius, Domitia—he tried to count them all up—then took out his tablets and stealthily peeped within them, and glancing at the seats of the Senators and the Knights, added another name or two. And all the while Gyrinus watched him, and wondered what he really wrote there, and why Domitia had looked so scared when she opened the tablets.

"Porphyrion! Porphyrion!" "Lacerna! Lacerna!" bawled the spectators. "Porphyrion wins!" "No; Lacerna wins!" "Porphyrion wins! The green for ever! Vivat Prasinus!"

The same evening, Domitian sent his Quaestor to

announce to Caius and Julius Piso, that they, with their mother and sister, must leave the City on the morrow. Late that night, Caius, Julius, Aulus Atticus, and the new-made freedmen (Eudoxus was not yet sufficiently recovered from the torture) carried the bodies of Piso and Cornelia on one great funeral-bed to the Sepulchre on the Nomentine Way. The women, exhausted with grief, were not present. There were no flutes, no mourning-women, no images—only Messala, and a few of Piso's friends, closely muffled from observation, followed behind. Aemilia and Calpurnia had cut off their hair, and laid it on Piso's breast.

A favouring wind made the flames burn quickly. When the fire had been quenched, Caius gathered the ashes and bones in two urns. Then they were deposited in the Sepulchre, and the mourners, repeating the words of farewell, returned to the City.

At daybreak, Piso's family, with Aulus Atticus, set out, under an escort of Praetorians, for Puteoli, whence they were to sail for the barren rock of Gyarus. At the Capene Gate, they were overtaken by another escort, conducting Calpurnius Crassus to the same destination.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ASCLETARIO TELLS HIS OWN FORTUNE.

The astrologers now found themselves unable to escape those evils of which they had warned others. Ascletario was detained in custody, and Domitian visited him daily, as was his wont, when he thought anything was to be got out of prisoners. He always, however, had a guard outside, and took the precaution to hold the prisoner's chains while he talked with him.

It could not be brought home to Ascletario that he had conspired; but he had undoubtedly predicted a change of government, to happen very shortly.

"I read it in the stars," said the unhappy astrologer. "Am I to be adjudged guilty of what is written in the stars?"

"Since you read the stars so well," sneered Domitian, "I wonder you did not also read in them that you had better have kept what you had read to yourself." Then, in the bantering tone which he

often adopted in his most savage moments, he said, "I'll wager, now, you could never find out by the stars what sort of a death *you* are to die?"

"Alas!" said the wretched Ascletario. "I know my end too well!"

"And what is it, pray?" asked Domitian, with a sneer.

"I am shortly to be torn in pieces by dogs," replied Ascletario, with a shudder.

"Nay, cheer up, my man! I'll warrant you from that death!" cried Domitian, overjoyed at the prospect of falsifying a prophecy. "You shall die another way, and I'll have your body burned with as much care as if you were an Emperor. You shall have a century of Praetorians as your vespillones—so make your mind quite easy!"

So saying, Domitian left the miserable astrologer to prepare for instant death. He gave orders for his execution, and for the burning of his body, with extraordinary precautions, in the common burying-ground, known as "The Pits," outside the Esquiline Gate, and went to the Bath, feeling that he had won another victory over Fate.

The Mime Latinus—a supple-limbed Campanian, blessed with a face which he could twist into as many different shapes as if it had been made of indiarubber—was one of the many persons who played

the part of Court Jester to the Emperor Domitian. Latinus could tell a story well. Any odd incident he had seen in the markets, any clever repartee of a lawyer in the Courts, a queer conversation he had overheard at a street-corner between two countrymen come in from Praeneste or Labicum to sell their farm produce—Latinus could reproduce it all, with so exact a mimicry of voice and expression, that you seemed to see the fat market-woman pommeling the boy who had tried to steal a lettuce, or the lantern-jawed counsel who had forgotten his client's name, fumbling about for a periphrase to conceal the fact. He could imitate to the life the high-pitched voices of the countrymen, as he repeated their criticisms of the pictures in the Portico of Octavia.

To-night, he came in soon after the Emperor had sat down to supper, and began to relate with infinite gusto how a couple of fellows had been hired to applaud Regulus, who was speaking that day in the Court of the Hundred; and how, not knowing his person, they had mistaken Certus for him, and had applauded Certus—he being retained on the other side—and of the furious quarrel which ensued—the laudicoeni demanding their three denarii a piece, which Regulus refused to pay, because they had not applauded him, and Certus, because he had not hired them. Latinus took off Regulus's cracked voice and

ungainly gestures to the life, as he repeated, "My good people, go to my friend Publius Certus! Go to my friend Publius Certus!"

Domitian laughed heartily—then, suddenly changing his mood, asked abruptly whether the storm of the afternoon had done any damage?

"None that I have yet heard of, Caesar, the Gods be thanked," replied Latinus. "On the contrary, it avenged you on your enemies?"

"What do you mean?" asked Domitian, all his suspicions instantly alert.

"I mean, Caesar, that the Thunderer has declared his judgment on Ascletario the Mathematicus——"

"What has happened to him?" asked Domitian, with visible disquietude, while Domitia, who sat below him, never took her eyes off Latinus.

"I did not even know he had been condemned, much less executed," said Latinus, whose business it was to make a short story long. "I had occasion, about the sixth hour, to go to see a friend who lives a little way out of town, and was hurrying back for fear of being overtaken by the storm—which I could see was brewing—when, a little before I reached The Pits and the Esquiline Gate, there came a tremendous gust of wind, accompanied by a terrific flash of lightning, and a peal of thunder as loud as though Pelion piled on Ossa had both come rattling down

together. Such a crash I never heard before, not even in this year of storms——"

"What did it do? Be quick, and tell us," said Domitian, unable to conceal his anxiety.

"I was stunned—for how long I know not," continued Latinus, trying to abridge his narrative, but evidently very reluctant to spoil it. "I found myself lying under a wall, drenched to the skin. I felt myself—hardly could I believe that I was alive"—Latinus was, indeed, extremely pale—"but I was unhurt, and though the rain still fell in torrents, the violence of the tempest seemed to have somewhat abated—the lightning came only at long intervals, and less vividly. As soon as I was a little recovered, I resolved to push on, and I was running as fast as I could over the slippery stones of the road, when, as I passed The Pits, I saw a strange and dreadful sight—a funeral-pyre had been overturned, the charred logs lay scattered in all directions, and a pack of those starveling curs which haunt cemeteries were devouring the half-burned body!"

Domitian's face had grown grey—he was scarcely recognizable. Domitia had uttered a strange sound—like a hoarse sigh. She leaned forward, watching Latinus, till her eyes seemed ready to start out of her head. Latinus remarked the effect he had produced, and his vanity as an artist was

flattered. He went on, giving full rein to his descriptive powers.

"At the very instant of my seeing this, there rushed up a crowd of persons—Praetorians and libitinarii, who, with cries and blows, endeavoured to drive off the dogs. They beat them with the logs—I saw one or two roll over dead. But these dogs, as every one knows, are half-famished—they live on the funeral cakes, and are all skin and bone—and they knew how long it would be before they got the chance of such another meal! They were more like wolves than dogs! In spite of all we could do—for I, too, assisted, out of pity towards the dead, and a desire to know who it was who was thus unhappy in his obsequies—in spite, I say, of all our shouts and blows, we could not get the dogs off till they had literally torn the body to pieces. Seldom, even in the arena, have I seen a body so mauled. The dogs growled, and looked ready to tear us too—truly, by their ferocious looks and snarls, they might have been the troop of Hecate herself——"

"Enough, enough, Latinus, you grow tedious," said Domitian, sullenly. "But how know you the dead man was Ascletario?"

"Truly, Caesar, you may ask that," replied the Court minion, quite unabashed by this snub. "His face, poor man, was completely gone—I saw the

cheek-bones. 'Who was this, that the Gods thus put to shame?' I asked of a Praetorian, when we had got together what was left of him, and the libitinarii —in despair, for the wood was sopping wet—were remaking the pyre. 'Ascletario, the Mathematicus,' says he. 'I believe he foretold that Caesar should die before himself—doesn't look much like it, does it?'"

But only a very feeble laugh greeted this jest of the Praetorian—such a faint and hollow cackle as a party of ghosts might raise in Pluto's Banquet-hall.

That night, Domitian walked longer than usual in the Portico. It was terrible to be alone there—to seem to see menacing arms reflected in the polished marble, to seem to hear stealthy footsteps coming up behind. Never had those footsteps seemed so near as to-night. And yet, whom did he fear? Ha! It was a mistake to have spared Crassus! And Apollonius—Apollonius had reappeared in Ephesus, and had more influence than ever. Domitian, with a furtive glance around, took out his tablets, and added these two names to the list. As he did so, the words came into his mind for the thousandth time—"You cannot kill your successor!"

"Ah, but I *have* killed him!" he thought. "I have killed Lucius Piso—and well had it been for me if I had slain him as soon as Agricola died! The

hour of peril approaches—if I can escape it, I am safe."

A slight noise made him start horribly. He thought he heard Ascletario's voice, and he shuddered. But it was only Domitia, come out to see why he walked so long. He sent her away, and continued his walk. Who would carry out his orders, and put to death this batch of traitors? Clodianus? Clodianus was a handsome fellow—far too pleasing to Domitia; Casperius would be better. He and Antonius Primus could be trusted to do what they were told. The thought of Primus suggested Cremona, and Cremona suggested the sack of the Capitol, and Domitian saw himself—disguised as a priest of Isis, creeping under the billets in the wood-house of Cornelius, in Velabrum, while the battle howled close by, and Vitellians and Vespasians contended for the lordship of the world. It was nearly thirty years ago; but he saw it all. And now, when should he strike the blow? Should he wait—only a few days more—till his fatal day was past? Or should he strike at once? So, if anything was brewing, he would have the choice of the situation—he would be fighting in the light, they in the dark. But the blows, to be of any use, must be simultaneous. He must strike *all*. Must *all* include Domitia? If so, it must include Clodianus. And if it included Clodianus, it must

include Domitia. "I am grown bald, and she prefers a younger man," he thought. "There is a change in Clodianus, too. He is like a man who has made up his mind. In what a cursed position am I! If I make a dolt Praefect of my Praetorians, all will go wrong; and if I make a clever man Praefect, he will undermine me, and proclaim himself Emperor! Clodianus must go—as for Domitia, I will wait a day or two, and watch her. Little minx! I have got so used to her and her impudence, that I shall miss her confoundedly! Still, if she is conspiring with Clodianus, she must go."

CHAPTER XXXII.

STEPHANUS.

The conspirators, meanwhile, had their own terrors, and were almost equally afraid to strike or not to strike. Above all, they feared betrayal. Some eavesdropper hid in the rafters might catch an incautious word — so, in Nero's days, Milichus betrayed Scaevinus, and toppled down the whole well-planned structure of Caius Piso's plot. If Norbanus had not been in the conspiracy, it would assuredly have smouldered out, like so many other half-formed schemes. That Norbanus was in it meant that the Praetorians could be controlled during the first few terrible hours after the deed.

The fatal 14th drew near—very near. Some of the conspirators were for deferring the attempt till after that day, when Domitian, having overlived his destined hour, would feel secure, and relax his vigilance. They could not tell whether the ominous words he uttered every now and then were inspired by the near

approach of the predicted day, or by knowledge of their own designs, or by his own dark broodings over some stroke he was meditating. The astrologers had said that a deed would shortly be done of which the whole world would talk. Domitian might have resolved to do that deed himself! The conspirators suspected each other, suspected a counterplot—suspected Domitian of having purposely contrived that they should see the list. Especially Parthenius—never easy since the killing of Epaphroditus—suspected Norbanus of being in league with Domitian, and he thought he saw the motive of it in Domitian's quarrel with Domitia—all this might have been done to destroy *her*. Norbanus was not sure of Clodianus. What if that seeming-simple young soldier—who knew so well how to win the favour of Princes—what if *he* had contrived this with Domitia, in order to betray Norbanus at the right moment, and step into his vacant place? With her lover Praefect of the Praetorian Guard, Domitia might do what Messalina almost did, and Clodianus might be the next Caesar. Each and all feared lest terror should induce one to betray the rest.

During the night which followed the death and funeral of Asclotario, Stephanus, Domitia's steward, sought out Parthenius. This man—a freedman of Domitia's—was in disgrace with his mistress, and was

just going to be prosecuted for intercepting certain moneys which he had received as steward. He had accumulated enough ill-gotten wealth for Domitian to have thought it worth while to put down his name on the list of those to be shortly taken off. He was an Asiatic Greek; a man of great physical strength, swarthy, black-bearded—in personal appearance resembling an Assyrian rather than a Greek. He had been forbidden to appear before Domitia, but Parthenius, who saw in him a useful instrument, had let him know that the indictment would probably be twisted into a capital charge. There was a way, however, by which he might not only escape punishment, but win back all his old favour with his mistress. Very early in the morning, Parthenius contrived to get a few words with Domitia, and when the Emperor returned from hearing some causes, she went to him, as usual, in the Portico, and presently began saying that abominably as Stephanus had behaved, she could not get on without him. "The wretch has all my affairs at his finger's ends," she said. "None of the others can tell me anything. I shall have to send for him, before I can settle a muddle they have got into about selling one of my farms in Campania."

"Send for him at once, then," said Domitian. "You can prosecute him afterwards."

"Oh, I'm not going to let him off!" cried Domitia. "I didn't mean that, I assure you! But the wretch is so useful, that I don't know how I am ever to manage my affairs without him!"

Then, with an admirable show of vexation and impatience—adjusted to exactly the degree proper under the circumstances, she desired Parthenius to send for the delinquent steward.

Conversation turned on other subjects; but it seemed to Domitia that sinister allusions were perpetually occurring. Every one present who was not in the secret had forgotten that Stephanus had been sent for—they were watching the Emperor as he read a despatch just arrived from Sarmatia.

Suddenly, a great noise and clatter was heard without. Domitian started, and turned pale. Clodianus, standing, as usual, by the door, put his hand to his sword. The little group of courtiers tried to look as though they were not frightened. "Some careless villain must have dropped a tray," said Saturius, the chief of the bedchamber servants. Domitia had uttered a little shriek.

But before any one could run to see what was the matter, the doors were thrown open, and Parthenius was seen, supporting Stephanus, deadly pale, and seeming scarcely able to stand.

"He fell on the stairs, and has hurt himself," said

the Chamberlain, as he somewhat unceremoniously assisted the trembling Stephanus to advance.

Domitian looked at him under his bristling red brows. "You must have been cheating your mistress to a pretty tune, to fall down with fright at being summoned before her!" he said.

The unfortunate steward gasped, unable to speak. A spasm of pain passed over his face; but he appeared very anxious to conceal his terror.

"May I perish, if I have knowingly wronged my gracious lady!" he cried, still panting with alarm, like a frightened hare. "It was that rascal of a fellow at Sinuessa, who deceived me—a plausible scoundrel——"

"Never mind about that now," said Domitia, cutting him short. "I want to ask you of quite another matter. How did I become possessed of the farm at Liturnum?"

Stephanus appeared gradually to recover himself, and answered Domitia's questions so fully and clearly, that she heaved a sigh of relief, and said—

"What a pity it is, Stephanus, that you are such a rogue! You would be an admirable steward, if only you would not cheat me quite so much!"

Stephanus invoked all the Gods to witness his perfect integrity, and called down their wrath on

his head if he was guilty. Domitia heard him with contemptuous good-humour—his clear explanations had pleased her; but she knew he had cheated her.

After this, Stephanus sneaked back into his old place, coming and going with obsequious diligence, evidently trying desperately to obtain a pardon, and really showing great capacity for administration—so much so, that Domitian effaced his name from the list one afternoon, muttering to himself, "I can always kill him, if I choose—better keep him a little."

He also several times effaced and rewrote Domitia's name—effacing it when she had been exerting her blandishments upon him—she was very coquettish with him just now, and he often felt unable to destroy her—and re-inserting it when he had surprised what looked to him like a glance of intelligence between her and Clodianus.

Of late, he had suspected Parthenius of an intrigue with Domitia; but the very intensity of his fears and suspicions misled and bewildered him. He was—and he knew he was—growing disturbed in his judgment.

Stephanus had been considerably hurt by his fall, and went about with his left arm and shoulder swathed in bandages. Domitian remarked it with grim satisfaction.

By a curious anomaly, it often happens that the

most suspicious persons cease to suspect just when their suspicions ought to be most aroused. So that, having conjured up a hundred imaginary perils, they blunder at last into an unsuspected snare. But to the conspirators it seemed impossible that Domitian should not perceive their thoughts. In remote corridors of the slaves' apartments, where they seemed to encounter each other as they went about their official duties, Parthenius and Stephanus sometimes held hurried consultation.

"He is so cunning—as deep as Tiberius," Stephanus would whisper. "If he suspects us but five minutes before we strike, we are lost! I gave myself up last night when he inquired so good-naturedly about my shoulder. Could he have seen through the stratagem, think you? How did I act my part?"

"To the life," replied Parthenius. "I myself believed you were really hurt."

"Did I seem properly frightened?" asked the steward.

"By Hercules! you looked like a man just going to be crucified!" replied Parthenius. "What with the terror of your disgrace, and the fright of the fall, you seemed more dead than alive."

"And by Hercules!" replied Stephanus, "it was not all play-acting—my knees knocked together without any telling."

"Then your excessive pallor—it would have taken in Ulysses himself—who they say was the artfullest man that ever lived!"

"It was a happy thought to drink goat's blood," said Stephanus. "Parthenius, come what may, we must strike to-morrow."

That night, at supper, Domitian was restless and excited. He had ordered some mushrooms; but when they were offered him, he refused them—perhaps remembering Claudius! Then he seemed to change his mind—began to take one from the dish—and then, changing again, said abruptly—

"No; keep them for me till to-morrow." And, as the servant removed them, he muttered, "If I may be permitted to eat of them!"

Such a speech was by no means unusual with a Roman, who feared, by presumptuous confidence, to offend the Gods. But it struck a chill of mortal terror to those of the conspirators who happened to be present; and when he added, turning to Entellus, the Keeper of the Records, "To-morrow, the moon will be dyed with blood in Aquarius, and something will be done of which men will talk through the whole circle of the world"—the cheek of Entellus—pale, as became a scholarly person—grew as yellow as a lemon, and Parthenius feared he would betray himself by excess of terror.

"The Gods avert these bloody omens, Caesar!" he said hastily. "We hear of nothing else nowadays, to such a pass are the astrologers come! For my part, I believe they are all rogues together, who practise upon the fears of honest men."

Even Domitian was deceived by Parthenius's coolness, and he thought, "He, at any rate, cannot have heard that Ascletario's prophecy as to himself was fulfilled!"

That night, he walked alone in the Portico. Since to-morrow was his fatal day, to-morrow he would strike the blow. In the morning he would hear the cause of Largius Proculus—the soothsayer who made that imprudent prophecy in Germany. Then, in the afternoon, he would send for Aelian Casperius, promise to make him sole *Praefectus Practorianus*, and arrange with him the arrest of the suspected persons. He had by this time added many more names to the list, until all the best men still left in the Senate were down on it. He hesitated long over Nerva's name.

"But no," he muttered, at last, closing the tablets. "*I cannot kill my successor.* He is an old man—feeble and sickly. Let *him* call himself my successor, if he will! Were he once out of the way, there might come in his place a younger, more formidable heir—Clodianus, perhaps! Ah! my pretty little

Domitia, there will very soon be an end put to your ogling!"

"You heard him at supper?" said Stephanus to Parthenius that night. "We must strike to-morrow —for to-morrow *he* means to strike!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE APPOINTED HOUR.

Domitian lay alone that night; he was afraid lest he might talk in his sleep, and set Domitia on her guard. He awoke about midnight in a horrible fright. He had dreamed that Piso—pale and bloodless, except for those two stains on his wrists—had seized him by the throat, and was strangling him. So vivid was the dream, that he leapt out of bed and called for help. He was bathed in sweat, and his voice was thick with sleep and terror.

"Fetch me fresh bed-coverings," he said to the cubicularii, when they came hurrying in. Gyrinus, who slept on the threshold, sat up, and rubbed his eyes.

"Have you had a bad dream, master?" he asked, when the cubicularii had retired.

Domitian was sitting up on the bed, staring into one corner of the room. Out of its shadow, in his dream, Piso had sprung upon him.

"Yes; a very bad dream," he said.

"It was the Fauns, I suppose," said Gyrinus. "You should rub yourself with a dragon's eye, boiled in oil."

"Did I say anything?" asked Domitian.

"I do not know, Caesar," replied the boy. "All I know is, I dreamed we were in the Amphitheatre, and a lion had got a man, and the man was groaning. Then I awoke, and heard you cry out."

"I dreamed of a lion, too," said Domitian, as he lay down, and seemed to compose himself to sleep again.

"Well, that is odd," said the boy. "I wonder what sort of an omen it is, when one dreams of a lion?"

Domitian rose early, and heard Largius Proculus in the Basilica. The German was found guilty of predicting the Emperor's deposition, and was condemned to death. But as he, too, had named the fatal 14th, he was to live till to-morrow, that he might die with the contumely due to a false prophet. Junius Celcus was next brought up. He had been detected in a treasonable correspondence, and had been condemned. But he had thrown himself at Domitian's feet, called him his Lord God, and promised, if time were granted him, to "remember some names." So, from day to day, he was brought up to assist his memory. To-day, Celcus remembered

several new names, and Domitian put them down in his note-book. And thus, in plans for his enemies' discomfiture, he passed the hours till it was near noon. He was to dine rather earlier than usual—he had so much to do between dinner and supper. Aelian Casperius was already warned to be in attendance. All things were ready.

But with the fatal hour so near, Domitian was full of apprehension. As they removed Celcus, he was so sunk in gloomy thought that he scratched the ulcerous lumps on his forehead until the blood trickled down. Perceiving it, a qualm of terror seemed to seize him, and Parthenius, who to-day stuck to him like his shadow—for fear of traitors—heard him mutter, "Would that this were all that will befall me!"

Then, trying to conceal his uneasiness, he asked the hour.

"The sixth hour must be close at hand, Caesar," replied Parthenius. It was indeed not yet the fifth hour; but the conspirators had arranged that he should be deceived as to the time, and just as Parthenius spoke, the voice of the *nunciator* was heard calling aloud—

"*Hora dici sexta!*"

To the conspirators, the clear, ringing voice of the crier was like the rattle of the lictor's axe, but to

Domitian it seemed the sweetest sound he had ever heard.

"What!" he exclaimed joyfully, "so late already? Was I so long closeted with that scoundrel Celcus? Quick! to the bath, since it is already the sixth hour!"

He was hastening towards the bath, when Stephanus came up, very pale and out of breath, and detained Parthenius, who was following Domitian. He whispered hurriedly with Parthenius, who presently ran after Domitian, overtaking him as he crossed the peristylium.

"It is Stephanus," he said. "He says he must speak with you without a moment's delay. He will not tell me what it is about, but he says there is not an instant to lose!"

Domitian recoiled in terror. He paused a moment, listening. If there had been a rising in the City, he would have heard shouts; but all was still. Besides, the time was past—the fifth was the fatal hour. Now let them do their worst!

"He is very urgent to speak with you before you go into the bath, Caesar," said Parthenius, who knew how finely balanced are the resolution and the fears of conspirators, and dreaded lest Stephanus's courage should fail him if there was the least delay.

"In my bedchamber, then," said Domitian, going thither. "And let every one else withdraw."

Gyrinus, curled up on a heap of cushions, raised his head as Domitian came in. A moment after Stephanus followed. His arm was still bound up. He began to speak instantly.

"Caesar," he said—and Gyrinus listened with all his ears—"your mortal enemy, Flavius Clemens, is not dead, as you believe, but is alive in a place I know of, and is preparing to attack you! Read this."

He pulled out a roll from his bosom, and gave it to Domitian, who at the mention of Flavius Clemens had staggered back against the bedstead, and now took the roll mechanically from Stephanus, and was opening it, when Stephanus stabbed him. Domitian uttered a shriek; but the wound was not mortal, and, with the strength of despair, he closed with Stephanus, crying, "Gyrinus! my dagger! my dagger!"

Gyrinus ran to the bed-head, and searched for the dagger, which Domitian always kept under his pillow.

"Here is only the handle of it, Master!" he cried, holding up the broken hilt.

"Call the slaves!" said Domitian, hoarsely.

He and Stephanus were rolling on the floor in a furious life-and-death struggle. The sham bandages had fallen off Stephanus's arm, and with all his great strength he was contending with Domitian for the

possession of the dagger. Domitian seized the golden chalice which stood ready for the libations to the Lares, and tried to dash out Stephanus's brains with it. "Pallas! Pallas! aid me, Pallas!" he cried, panting, as he clutched at the dagger with bleeding fingers. Then he tore madly at Stephanus's eyes, still calling on "Pallas! Pallas!"

Meanwhile, Gyrinus, screaming for help, had found that all the doors were fast.

Suddenly, while this furious struggle was raging—Domitian trying to wrest the dagger from Stephanus, Stephanus trying to stab him in some more vital part—the door nearest the peristylium was flung open, and Clodianus rushed in, followed by Saturius, and several gladiators, all with swords drawn.

"Die, wretch!" cried Clodianus, plunging his sword into Domitian's heart. "Take this for Chione!"

* * * * * *

The same night, Marcus Cocceius Nerva was proclaimed Emperor of Rome.

THE END.

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